

# Assessing the impact of the Somerleyton Road development

First benchmark report

February 2016



# Assessing the impact of the Somerleyton Road development

A report commissioned by igloo regeneration, on behalf of the Somerleyton Road partners: Lambeth Council, Brixton Green and Ovalhouse.

This report has been written by Nicola Bacon and Emma Nielsen, with additional research by Lucia Caistor Arendar and So Jung Rim.

Social Life was set up in 2012 by the Young Foundation, and is now based in Elephant & Castle. All our work is about the relationship between people and places.

First published in 2016

© Social Life  
Some rights reserved.

12a Peacock Yard, Iliffe Street  
London SE17 3LH

[www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)

Design by Oh My

# Contents

Introduction & key findings .....	4
Approach .....	12
Somerleyton Road .....	17
The social sustainability assesment .....	22
Conclusion.....	59
Appendix .....	61

# **1. Introduction & key findings**

# Introduction

**I**n 2014 Social Life was commissioned by igloo regeneration, on behalf of the three Somerleyton Road project partners - Lambeth Council, Ovalhouse and Brixton Green - to assess the impact of the Somerleyton Road development, particularly focusing on the wellbeing of the residents living near to the development.

Our focus has been on quantifying the impact of the scheme on wellbeing and quality of life. The initial benchmarking research was carried out between Spring and Autumn 2015. After the development is complete further research will take place, repeating the same approach. This will explore the changes in the area and the impact on residents, and assess the impact of the scheme on the surrounding areas.

## About Social Life

Social Life is a social enterprise, created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how peoples' day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

For more information visit [www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)



*Figure 1: View down Somerleyton Road from Coldharbour Lane*  
Photo: Emma Nielsen

# Key findings

The benchmarking research aimed to build an understanding of how residents living in close proximity to Somerleyton Road and people living and working in the surrounding area feel about their local area and about the changes taking place.

The research focused on two key groups:

- *the immediate neighbours of the scheme, residents living near the road*
- *wider stakeholders, including local businesses and traders, local public sector agencies, and community and voluntary agencies.*

The research used a number of different methods as no one single method is enough to understand the different perspectives and experiences in a complex local neighbourhood.

259 residents were involved in the research, through a residents survey and street interviews, as well as 18 traders and 13 agencies.

218 people were interviewed in a face-to-face household survey in a 200m-radius circle around Somerleyton Road. This area was divided into five smaller areas with distinctive housing stock and geographies: the Moorlands Estate; Southwyck House; north of Coldharbour Lane; west of Railton Road; and Bob Marley estate, Mayall Road and Railton Road.

## The assessment

The overall approach to the research has been informed by Social Life's social sustainability framework. This sets out a framework for thinking about the social dimensions of community life and how these ideas can be translated into practical initiatives.

The social sustainability benchmark for the area shows that residents surveyed gave more positive responses than residents in comparable areas to questions about their satisfaction with the area overall; their relationships with their neighbours; and their satisfaction with their lives. Compared to people living in comparable areas, residents reported feeling safe in general, with some concerns. Their sense of influence was as expected. Their overall wellbeing reflects the Lambeth average.

Looking in more detail at the smaller areas reveals a more detailed picture of community dynamics. The area north of Coldharbour Lane, which is primary new housing, is home to people with different social attitudes to the wider area. Residents here reported weaker neighbourly relationships, however they were more likely than residents of comparable areas to plan to stay in the area in the future.

Perceptions of the area are broadly similar across the rest of the area - the Moorlands Estate, Southwyck House, Bob Marley Estate and west of Railton Road - all areas with many longterm residents. Within this, people living west of Railton Road have more positive scores

than the other areas, with residents of the Moorlands Estate reporting lower scores.

A recurrent theme across all interviews, with residents, traders, businesses and agencies, was the extent of change that had taken place in Brixton in recent years, and the impact this has had on residents lives. When thinking about change over the last decade, residents generally expressed positive feelings and spoke of improvements, including less crime and a more diverse population. However, when thinking future change, more anxieties were voiced, often linked to a fear of exclusion and that changes will benefit more affluent social groups at the expense of some of Brixton's more settled population.

Many, especially older, residents are happy about the area's improved reputation, and feel positive towards the new Somerleyton Road development as part of this. Younger residents worried more about the changes taking place, and voiced fears of not being able to stay in the area. The research reflected wider concerns in Brixton about local issues, including rent rises for the traders in the Atlantic Road, and various growth and regeneration projects.

### **Amenities & social infrastructure**

Residents describe Somerleyton Road as well connected with good transport links to central London. Schools and shopping facilities are mentioned positively. However residents said that there are not enough facilities that bring people together and many emphasise the lack of provision for young people.

Agencies voiced the hope that the new children's and community facilities in the development will provide a place for people to meet, seek advice and support.

These results are broadly similar to Lambeth wide data, however the Brixton respondents put greater emphasis on the value of "people, community and neighbours", and the shops and market.

### **Social & cultural life**

Residents of the survey area feel a higher level of neighbourliness than what would be expected in comparable places. The area north of Coldharbour Lane is less neighbourly than the more established areas surveyed. People described a supportive community, however one that is less close than in the past.

Residents described their local community as being within the triangle between the railway, Coldharbour Lane and Loughborough Park Road, commenting on its isolation from central Brixton.

Alongside unease about change, there is a strong sense of belonging among residents and traders in the area, often linked to time spent in the area and the local facilities.

Residents spoke of how people from different backgrounds get on well and that people respect different ethnicities. Residents positively described increasing diversity in recent years, describing how more Asian, European and African residents have moved into the area.

**...Brixton respondents put greater emphasis on the value of "people, community and neighbours"**

## Residents

spoke of the “Brixton spirit” of diversity and multiculturalism, and how this defines the local community. Some older residents spoke of their fears that the “Brixton spirit” is under threat.

Wellbeing amongst residents surveyed was the same as the Lambeth average, and slightly higher than the London average. However residents of the Moorlands estate and Southwyck house have lower wellbeing than the other small areas surveyed.

Residents feel overall that the area is safe, and has become safer in recent years. There are some concerns about safety after dark. Some people are hesitant about going down Somerleyton Road at night.

## Voice & influence

People living on the Moorlands Estate, West of Railton Road and Bob Marley Road, Mayall Road and Railton Road are likely to feel that they cannot influence decisions affecting their local area.

Those living in Southwyck House and North of Coldharbour Lane the results tended to agree that they have influence. P

People renting from Lambeth Council or Metropolitan, or people living in low cost home ownership feel they have less influence than people owning their house or living in private rented accommodation.

Residents and traders often reported feelings of powerlessness and having little control over what is happening in their local area. Negative views about control were often related to fears about the character of the area, local facilities changing and longstanding residents being pushed out.

For traders the impact of rent increases in the Railway Arches and the number of established shops closing down in the local area coloured their views.

Agencies commented how residents’ personal uncertainties (about housing security, cut in benefits and immigration status) affect their ability to participate in local activities.

## Adaptability & resilience

The majority of people surveyed felt they were managing financially, and with their housing costs. However, there are more people struggling financially living on the Moorlands Estate and in Southwyck House than in the other small areas. Tenants of Metropolitan Housing report the most difficulties, but some owner occupiers and private renters also report that they are finding it very difficult to get by.

Many agencies and community organisations working in the area spoke of increasing transience. This precariousness feeds into people’s sense of control over their lives and their willingness to take part in local activities and to engage in discussions about change.

These factors affecting resilience disproportionately affect people living on lower incomes. Many residents of the Moorlands estate and Southwyck House face particular challenges to their resilience to future change.

**Residents spoke of the “Brixton spirit” of diversity and multiculturalism, and how this defines the local community.**



## Feelings about the development

Half of the residents surveyed said they knew a little, or had some information, about the development on Somerleyton Road; almost half had no knowledge; a small proportion said they knew a lot about the plans. Residents from the Moorlands Estate were most informed. A very small proportion of residents surveyed had attended meetings.

There were mixed opinions about whether residents have been involved in shaping plans, agencies reported feeling included in this process.

Interviews with agencies and residents revealed a similar pattern, those who were in favour of the Somerleyton Road development were more likely to focus on what they knew of the development itself, whilst those who were unhappy with it or opposed were more likely to speak about their reservations with different partners involved in the development.

Over a third of the residents interviewed were positive about the development plan, a similar number were unsure or did not know. Some caveated their support with “as long as the housing is for local people and affordable”.

Of the people who were negative, almost half voiced more general concerns, for example fearing the new development would change lifestyles, whilst more than a half reported explicit opposition.

There was a positive feeling that something was being done about the site at Somerleyton Road. Both agencies and residents spoke of their hopes that the development would provide affordable housing and “something” for the existing community. The new theatre is welcomed as a facility to engage children and young people.

Traders were less well informed about the Somerleyton Road development and their reactions often reflected their views about wider changes in Brixton. Some traders who were newer to the area, or whose customers included more affluent residents, thought the development could increase trade.

A strong theme that came out of many discussions was lack of trust, in the development plans and whether they would materialise, in the project partners’ good faith and in the process that had been followed to gauge community views and to involve local people.

Part of the suspicion was about factors specific to Somerleyton Road, and part relates to the sheer number of initiatives in Brixton that were galvanising debate. The project partners - in particular Lambeth Council and Brixton Green - received criticism.

Polarisation of views has made it very difficult for many to trust the plans laid out for Somerleyton Road and to acknowledge the role of different agencies in developing these.

Many of the sceptics were not against the idea of building new housing, but did not believe it would be affordable and feared further displacement of existing residents and shops.

**[residents will support plans] “...as long as the housing is for local people and affordable”**



## **2. Approach**

# Approach

This benchmarking research aims to build an understanding of how residents living in close proximity to Somerleyton Road and people living and working in the surrounding area feel about their local area and about the changes taking place.

There were two aims:

- to understand how the areas immediately neighbouring the Somerleyton Road site are faring, particularly in terms of residents wellbeing and quality of life
- to understand how the development of the scheme to date has been perceived by residents and local stakeholders, including businesses, traders, community organisations and public sector agencies.

The research therefore focused on two key groups:

- *the immediate neighbours of the scheme*, people living within a 200m radius of the site. This included most of the Moorlands Estate and all of Southwyck House, some of the new housing to the north of Coldharbour Lane and some streets on the other side of Somerleyton passage
- *wider stakeholders*, including local businesses and traders, local public sector agencies, and community and voluntary agencies.

## The context

One of Brixton's defining characteristics is its history of migration. Brixton became home to the first Caribbean settlers in London in the 1950s, joining an established Irish community; from the 1970s onwards other new communities arrived in the area, often inspired by the areas diversity, its history of protest and alternative living, and its relatively affordable housing. Since 2000 Brixton has become increasingly diverse, like other inner London areas, with new arrivals from the middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe.

For the last decade Brixton has experienced rising house prices and changing demographics. A growing number of young professional homebuyers have been attracted to the area by its cultural diversity, nightlife and restaurants, and good transport connections. The growth in the night-time economy particularly in the number of bars, cafés and restaurants, have attracted new visiting populations into the area. These people are largely more affluent and less diverse than Brixton's longstanding communities.

Unease about change, some resentment, and fear of its impact on long established less affluent residents have been frequently voiced, within this research and in other studies. One of Brixton's defining characteristics is the history of popular protest and activism, from violent uprisings to squatting and oppositional municipalism in the 1980s. This tradition of community action, against the backdrop of the extent of ongoing change and unease about what this means, have been important in framing the reaction to the Somerleyton development.

The research did not start with a blank slate. Discussions over the future of the Somerleyton Road site started over five years ago and there is a complex history of relationships between the three organisations that became the project partners - Lambeth Council, Ovalhouse and Brixton Green - and different stakeholders and groups within the local community. The eviction of the Carlton Mansions Housing Co-op in 2015, after 20 years of living in the distinctive Carlton Mansions building at the Coldharbour Lane end of Somerleyton Road, generated strong feelings and, for some, has soured views of the scheme.

At the time the research was taking place there were several controversies in the immediate neighbourhood that affected residents' views. This includes redevelopment to Brixton Arches by Network Rail, and the demolition and replacement of the Loughborough Park Estate at the south end of Somerleyton Road by Guinness Trust. While the research was going on, over Spring and Summer of 2015, a number of fiercely contested incidents took place around the management of meanwhile space on Somerleyton Road.

One of the important questions that this research has investigated is how local reactions to change have affected perceptions of the Somerleyton Road development, and to what extent concerns are shared by different groups within the local population.

Social Life had carried out a programme of deliberative workshops in 2013, commissioned by Brixton Green, and whilst this gave the team valuable local knowledge, it also posed a risk to the perceived impartiality of the research amongst local people and agencies.

## The research

The research used a number of different methods as no one single method is good enough to understand the different perspectives and experiences in a complex local neighbourhood.

In total 259 residents were involved in the research, 18 traders and 13 agencies.

### Face-to-face household survey

218 people were interviewed in a face-to-face household survey in a 200m-radius around Somerleyton Road. The area was divided into five smaller areas: the Moorlands Estate; Southwyck House; north of Coldharbour Lane; west of Railton Road; and Bob Marley Estate, Mayall Road and Railton Road. These smaller areas have distinctive housing stock and geographies.

The railway line bisects the 200m radius, with the Bob Marley estate, Railton Road estate and Myall Rd are connected by Somerleyton Passage to the Moorlands estate and Somerleyton Road. The areas within the 200m radius that lie to the west of Railton Road are experienced by residents as being more distant from the site. To reflect this, this sample for the west of Railton Road area was reduced by ten percent, and the sample for the four other areas boosted proportionately.

**In total 259 residents were involved in the research, 18 traders and 13 agencies.**

The household survey asked a series of structured questions about perceptions of the area, and residents' views of the Somerleyton development. It was carried out over two weeks in November 2015.

### Street interviews with residents

In April and May 2015 the team spoke to 41 residents on Somerleyton Road and in the streets surrounding the area. Of these, three were residents of Southwyck House, 26 were residents of the Moorlands Estate, two lived on Coldharbour Lane and seven lived in other areas (Bob Marley Way, Wiltshire Road, Loughborough Road, Barrington Road, and Moorland Road).

The questions asked focused on broad topics: what residents like or dislike about the area; do they feel they belong?; do they feel they have control or influence over what happens in the area?; and their views of the new development. The street interviews allowed residents to give considered answers and to take part in deeper conversations than in the face-to-face interviews. These helped understand the complexities of people's experiences and allowed the researchers to have more complex and insightful conversations than could take place within the more structured household survey.

### Interviews with traders

In April 2015 we spoke to 18 traders within the survey area. The majority were on Atlantic Road and Coldharbour Lane. We asked the traders questions about the area and local community and about their perspectives about the development plans for Somerleyton Road.



Figure 2: Location of all interviews

### Interviews with local organisations and agencies

We carried out 13 interviews between April and December 2015. These included interviews with local community organisations, service providers and agencies as well as residents who are active in the community.

The semi-structured interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and were mainly face-to-face, either one to one or in groups. A small number took place over the telephone where agencies were too busy to meet in person. We spoke to agencies that work with children and young people, local social landlords, community organisations and resident groups, the police, and three resident groups.

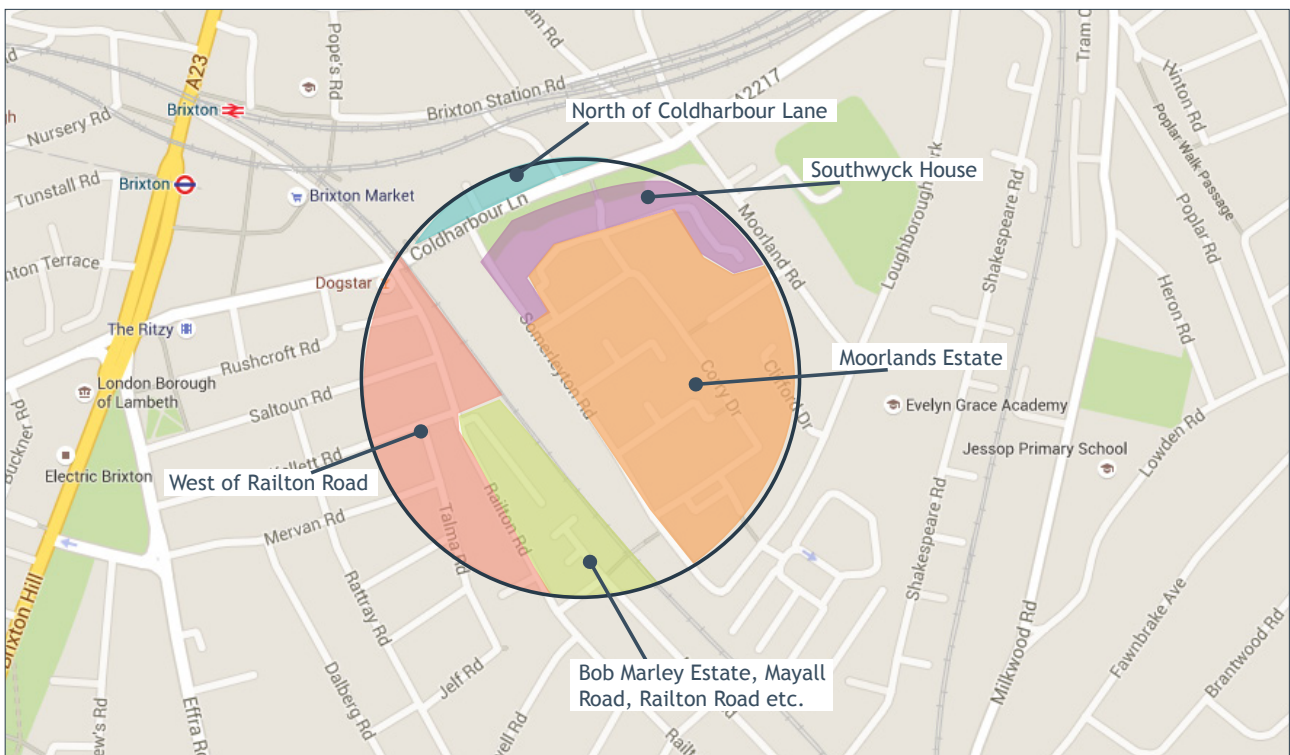


Figure 3: The sample areas for the face-to-face household survey

## **3. Somerleyton Road**



# Somerleyton Road: the street

**S**omerleyton Road is near the centre of Brixton, to the east, separated by the main overland railway that runs through the town. The Moorlands Estate that borders the east side of Somerleyton Road is isolated further by a triangle of other railway lines. Somerleyton Road is close to Brixton Village, Brixton Market and the tube and railway station.

Historically, the east side of Brixton has been less prosperous than the rest of the town and deprivation levels remain high (see image three for IMD levels). In the 1950s and 60s, before the demolition of the Victorian terraced housing and the building of the Moorlands Estate, the street became home to the first people arriving from the Caribbean, having some of the lowest rents in Brixton at the time.

The road is characterised by a row of large plane trees running down on one side, and changing architecture from the monumental architecture of Southwyck house to the lowrise of the Moorlands estate and the new housing development of Loughborough Park Estate in the southern-end. Until 2015, the only residents on this site lived in Carlton Mansions, a former block of railway workers housing, occupied by the Carlton Mansions Housing Coop. This is a locally listed building, with the Nuclear Dawn mural on its left side. The other side of the street, the east site, is part of the Moorlands estates with Southwyck House at the north end.

Railway lines physically divide the site from Atlantic Road and Railton Road, and other residential areas. The Moorlands Estate has become an enclave, hidden away behind Southwyck House. The Estate is one of six large housing estates in Brixton, its 550 two-storey homes are owned and managed by Metropolitan Housing. The Estate is also home to Hillmead Primary School, Chestnut Nursery and a children's centre, a community centre run by Metropolitan and a small convenience store.

Southwyck House is at the northern end of the Estate facing Coldharbour Lane. The block consists of 176 flats and has become known locally as "the Barrier Block" because of its characteristic



*Figure 4: Aerial view of Southwyck House, Moorlands Estate and Somerleyton Road*  
Photo: Brixtonblog.com

architecture. It was designed to deflect noise and pollution from a later abandoned inner-London motorway project.

On the other side of Coldharbour Lane are Brixton Village and two newer gated developments, Brixton Square and the Viaduct. These developments have introduced a new group of professional residents to the area.

The other side of the railway, to the west of Railton Road, is mainly residential areas with small streets of Victorian terraces.

### The residents

The Moorlands Estate and Southwyck House are within the Coldharbour Ward, one of the most deprived areas in Lambeth and in London (see fig. 8). The Office of National Statistics' Index of Multiple Deprivation show that the survey area lies mainly within the most deprived 10% of small areas in England. The areas to the west and south of the survey area are more affluent.

The residents survey reveals the different demographics of these smaller areas, with the area north of Coldharbour Lane having a newer and significantly less diverse population.

Residents of the area north of Coldharbour Lane are more likely to be newer to the area, as this housing has been built in recent years. This group is much less diverse than populations of the other small areas, over 80% of residents surveyed defined themselves as white, a significantly greater proportion than in the other areas.

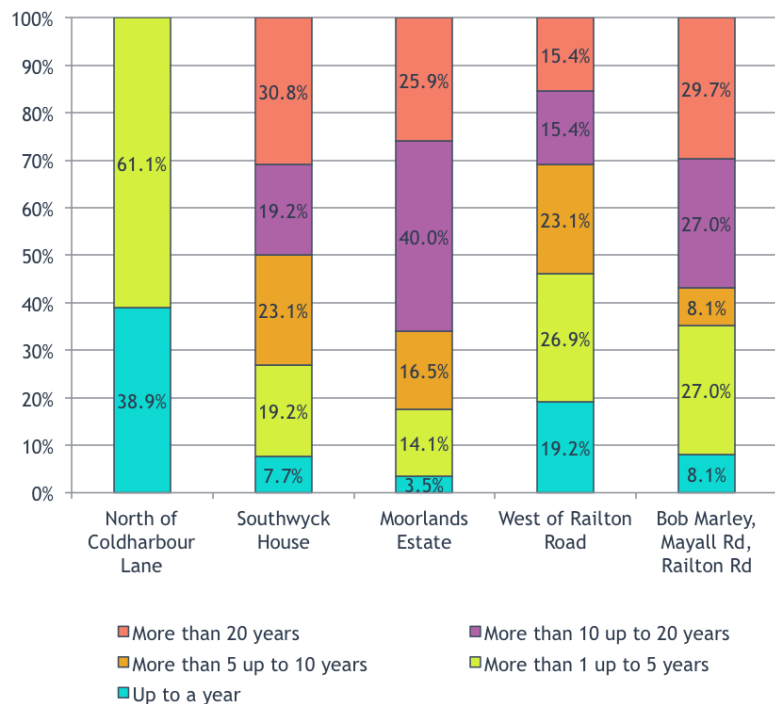


Figure 5: Length of time residents have lived on the estate, by small area  
N = 218



Figure 6: Ethnicity by small area  
N = 213

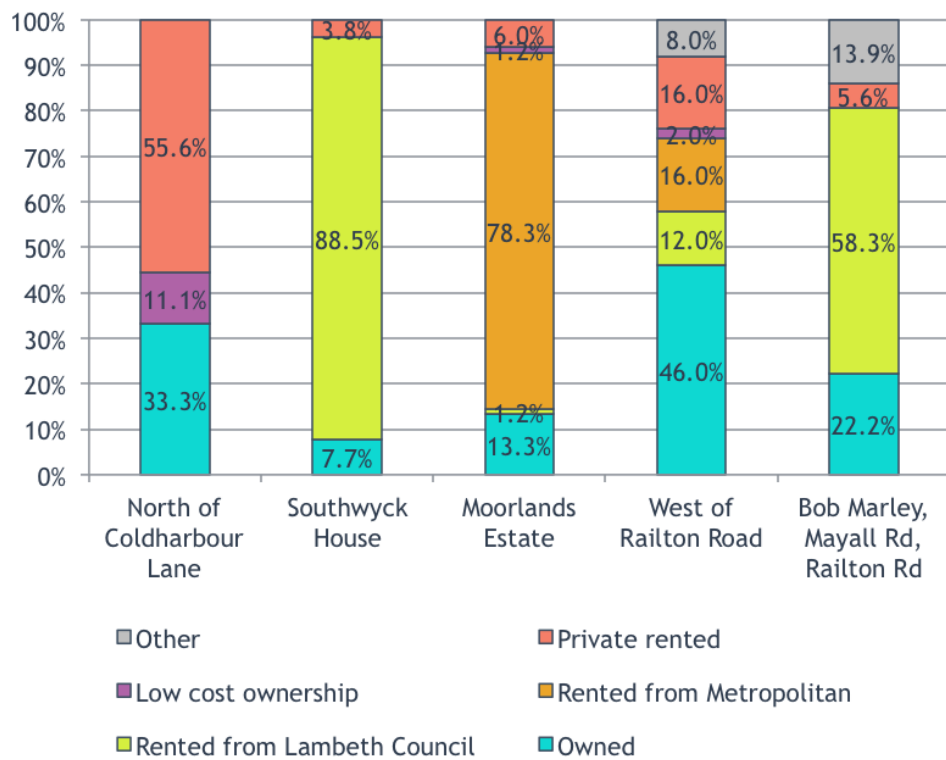


Figure 7: Tenure by small area  
N = 213

The three small survey areas that are dominated by social housing - Southwyck House, the Moorlands Estate and the Bob Marley Estate - are home to the most stable population in the survey area, with over half of residents having lived in their homes for over 10 years. They are also home to the highest proportions of residents describing themselves as black, Asian and mixed.

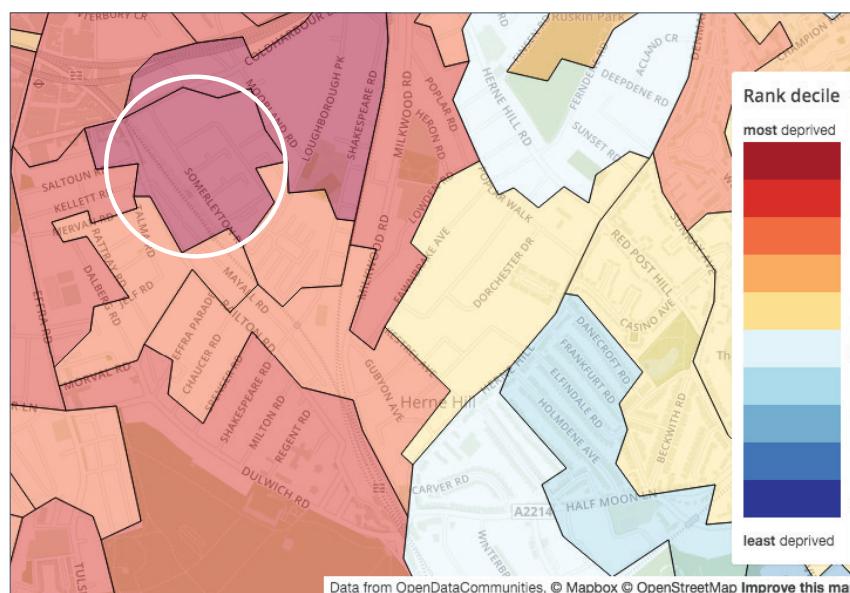
The area west of Railton Road is more mixed in terms of tenure, sitting midway between the two extremes of the new housing and social housing in terms of length of time resident and ethnic diversity.

### Plans for redevelopment

The west side of Somerleyton Road, a long narrow strip of land around 15,000 square meters, was in 2009 identified in the Brixton Masterplan as “a key regeneration opportunity” due to its proximity to central Brixton, major transport links and amenities. The site is largely, but not wholly, owned by Lambeth council and is now largely used as depot space, with a temporary school building and refuse depot.

Lambeth Council wants to redevelop the west side of the street, and to use this as a catalyst for economic activity in the neighbourhood. Ovalhouse theatre, currently located in Kennington, is planning to move all its activities to a new purpose built building at the north end of Somerleyton Road, on Coldharbour Lane. Carlton Mansions will be refurbished and become part of the new development situated next to the Oval House Theatre.

Brixton Green, set up in 2007 as a community owned mutual organisation, now with 1,000 shareholders, has focused on developing the site as a base for community empowerment and enterprise. Brixton Green has been working with Lambeth and Ovalhouse to jointly develop proposals for the site. Lambeth’s formal intention to cooperate with Brixton Green and Ovalhouse was announced in January 2013.



**Figure 8: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015**  
Source: [www.opendatacommunities.org](http://www.opendatacommunities.org)

## **4. The social sustainability assessment**

# Social sustainability

Social Life defines social sustainability as “a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world - infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve”.

The overall approach to the research has been informed by Social Life’s social sustainability framework. This was developed following a thorough review of evidence, from the UK and internationally, about what makes communities thrive, commissioned by the Homes and Communities Agency in 2010. It sets out a framework for thinking about the social dimensions of community life and how these ideas can be translated into practical initiatives.

The original framework was developed for new housing developments. Subsequently the framework has been evolved to capture wellbeing and community strength in existing areas, putting greater emphasis on the adaptability and resilience of local communities.

After a decade of work on sustainable communities by policymakers and professionals much is known about the importance of the quality of the built environment and community facilities, and how these contribute to residents’ satisfaction and wellbeing. There is less understanding however, about the practical steps that can be taken to make these aspirations tangible, about what can be done in practice. Internationally there is growing interest in “social sustainability” as a way to frame these concepts and to rebalance the sustainable development agenda to take account of social as well as environmental and economic needs. A small number of organisations are currently putting the concept of social sustainability into practice in urban development.

## The four dimensions of social sustainability

The framework has been used to develop measurement frameworks which have been used by housing associations, housing developers, and local government.

Social Life have developed a method of benchmarking residents survey results against what would be expected in comparable areas to help understand how areas are faring. This enables a prediction to be made of how residents are likely to feel about their neighbourhoods, their sense of belonging, their fear of crime, their wellbeing, and their relationships with their neighbours and between different groups living in an area.

This approach uses data that is openly available, from government and research councils' national surveys including the Understanding Society Survey, the Citizenship Survey, the Crime Survey England & Wales, and Taking Part.

### The four dimensions of social sustainability



#### Voice & influence

Residents' ability & willingness to take action to shape the local environment; governance structures to represent residents & engage them in shaping local decisions.



#### Amenities & social infrastructure

Amenities & support services for individuals & communities: schools, social spaces, transport & community workers.



#### Social & cultural life

Sense of belonging, wellbeing, community cohesion, safety, relationships with neighbours & local networks.



#### Adaptability & resilience

Flexible planning; housing, services & infrastructure that can adapt over time; adaptable use of buildings & public space.



Figure 9: Social Life's social sustainability framework

These national surveys have been chosen because they ask questions about residents' perceptions of the places they live in, including their sense of belonging, their relationship with neighbours, questions about attitudes to different groups, fear of crime and trust. The answers to these questions are important to understanding social sustainability at the local level.

The sample sizes of these surveys are not large enough to disaggregate responses directly to small local area. However, it is possible to match this data to small areas using two analytic tools that have been developed by ONS (Office for National Statistics): the output area classification system (OAC) and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This enables us to see how residents of small areas are likely to feel. This is predicative data, not a robust portrait of the neighbourhood.

For more information on this approach, see [www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)

The OAC classifications for the survey area are in the map below.

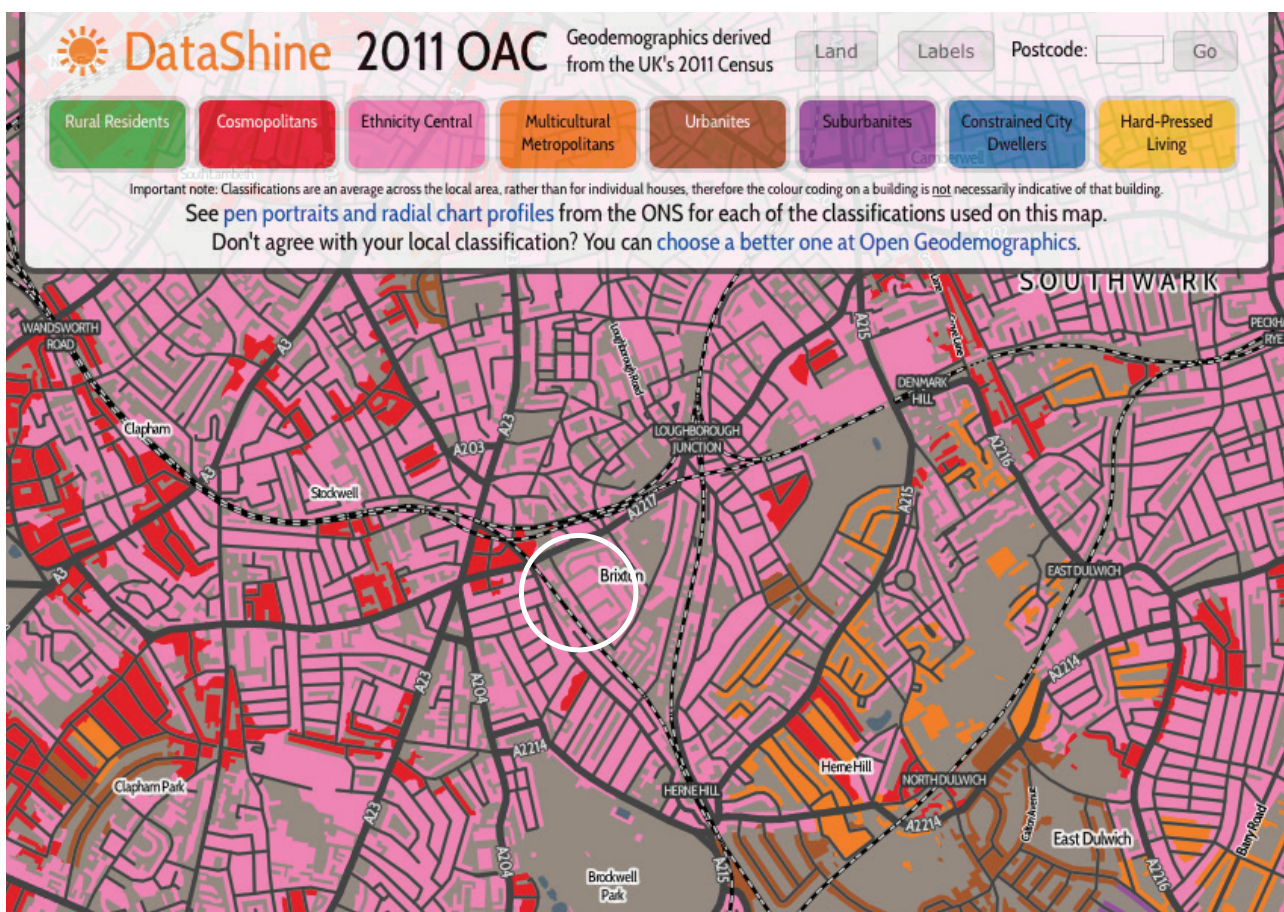


Figure 10: Output area classification of area, 2011 OAC  
Source: [www.datashine.org.uk](http://www.datashine.org.uk)



## Social sustainability in the area around Somerleyton Road

The social sustainability benchmark for the area shows that residents surveyed gave more positive responses than residents in comparable areas to questions about their satisfaction with the area overall; their relationships with their neighbours; and their satisfaction with their life. Their sense of influence was as expected. Their overall wellbeing reflects the borough average.

Although they generally reported feeling safer than people living in comparable areas, they felt that their area was more unsafe than the country as a whole.

Exploring in more detail at the smaller areas within the overall survey area reveals a more detailed picture of community dynamics. The area north of Coldharbour Lane, which is primarily new housing, is home to people with different social attitudes to the wider area. Residents here reported neighbourly relationships that were weaker than in other parts of the survey area (however close to the national average), however they were more likely than residents of comparable areas to plan to stay in the area in the future.

In the rest of the area - Moorlands Estate, Southwyck House, Bob Marley Estate and west of Railton Road - all areas with many longterm residents, social attitudes and social sustainability scores are broadly similar, although people living west of Railton Road score more strongly than the other areas, with the Moorlands Estate having more weaknesses. There are some concerns about safety on the Moorlands Estate and west of Railton Road.

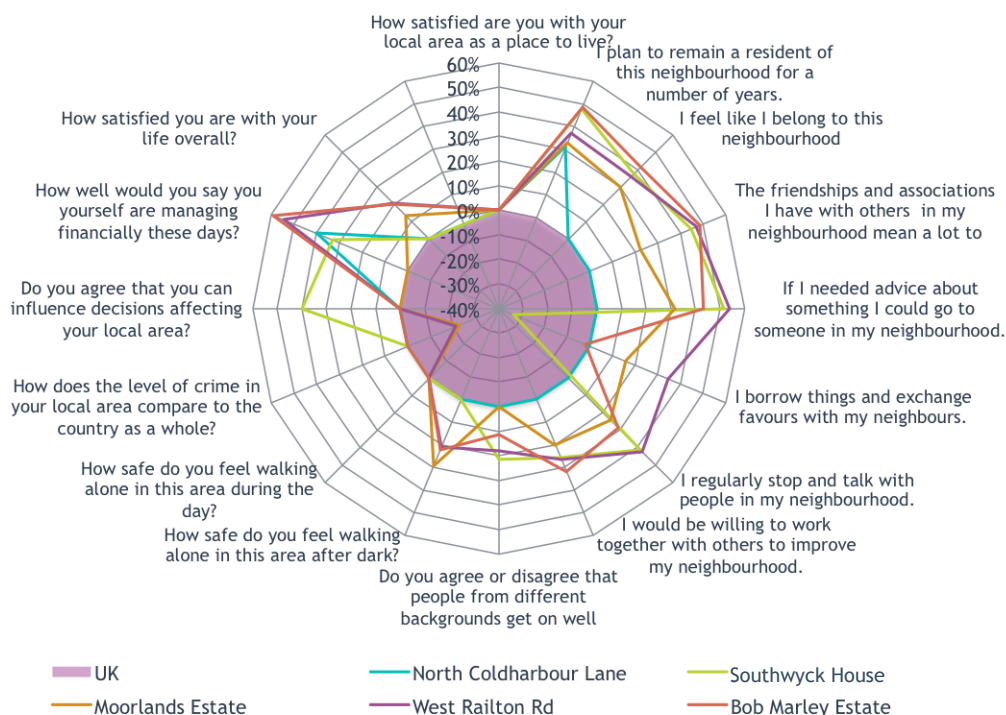


Figure 11: % difference between residents survey results for small areas and comparable areas  
N = 147 - 217

This diagram only reports statistically significant results, non significant results have been changed to 0

# Residents perceptions of the area overall

**T**here is a high level of satisfaction with the local area as a place to live, which is similar to comparable areas but higher than the UK average. Satisfaction with the area was highest amongst people living north of Coldharbour Lane and in Southwyck House (also bordering Coldharbour Lane), and lowest amongst people living in the Bob Marley Estate. Home owners and private rented tenants reported higher satisfaction, with low cost home owners (for example people in shared ownership homes) reporting lowest satisfaction with the area.

## The response to change

A recurrent theme across all interviews, with residents, traders, businesses and agencies, was the extent of change that had taken place in Brixton in recent years. When thinking about the last decade, residents generally expressed positive feelings about changes in the area, including less crime and more diversity. The area was described as a place that used to have a bad reputation, being a “no-go zone” ten years ago but that it has “calmed down” now.

More anxieties were voiced about future change, linked to a fear of exclusion and a perception that changes are intended to benefit more affluent social groups.

Many, especially older, residents were happy about the area getting a better name, and felt positive towards the new development as part of this. Younger residents worried more about the changes taking place, describing concerns that Brixton was becoming “not for them”, and concerns that they would not be able to stay in the area in the future.

Some residents and traders voiced concerns about whether the existing community will be displaced. For many this was linked to events at the nearby railway arches, where some longstanding and well-regarded local businesses have closed in the face of proposed rent increases by Network Rail.

**“The area is becoming nicer but people who’ve lived here long time, are getting pushed out.”**

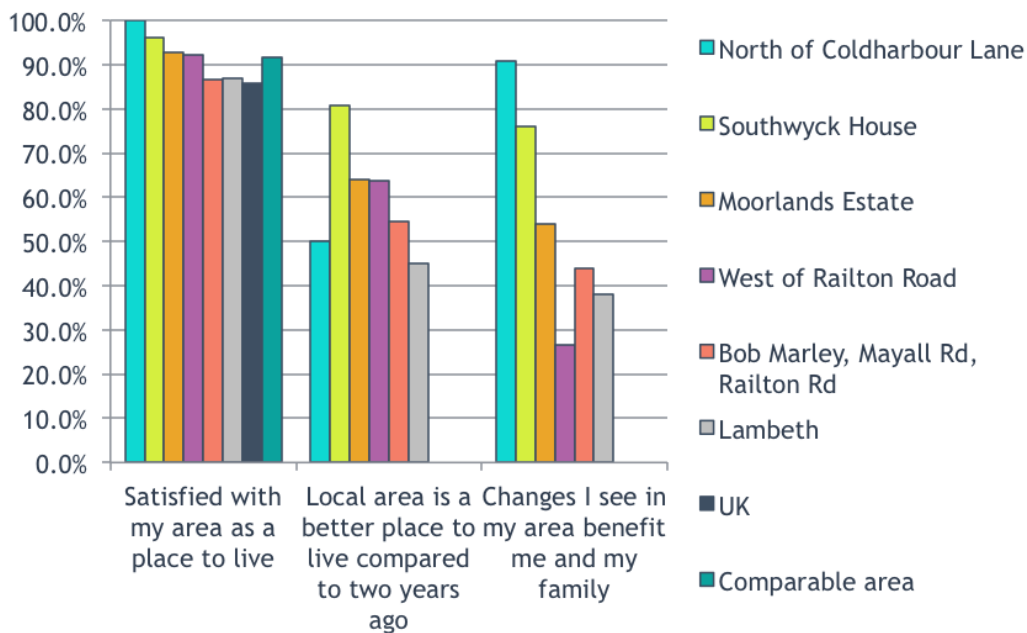
Trader on Coldharbour Lane

**“There used to be good English breakfasts but now there are only coffee shops.”**

White male housing association resident, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate

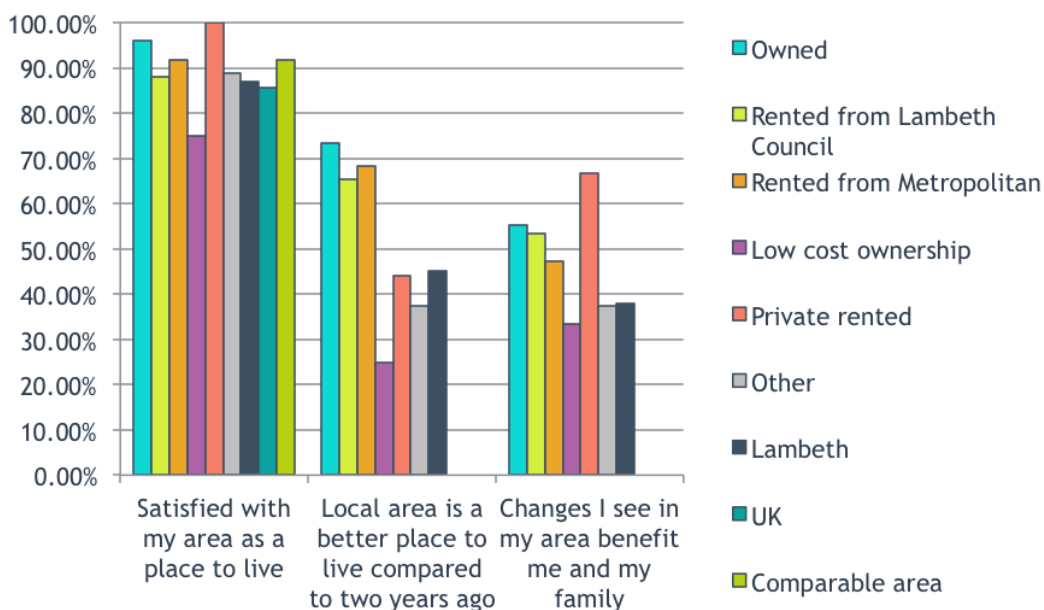
## The residents survey found that:

- the majority describe the changes taking place in the area as positive. In Southwyck House and north of Coldharbour Lane a majority feel that the changes in the area over the last two years benefit them and their family
- people living on the Moorlands Estate, and in the areas west of Railton Road and Bob Marley Road, Mayall Road and Railton Road have more mixed responses
- only a small group say the changes over the last two years affect them and their family negatively.



**Figure 12: Residents' responses to questions on their local area as a place to live in accordance with area.**  
 N = 167 to 217, N for Lambeth = 1238, N for UK average = 2020, N for comparable area = 193.

There was no data from comparable areas and UK to the questions "my local area is a better place to live compared to two years ago" and "the changes I see in my area benefit me and my family".



**Figure 13: Residents' responses to questions on their local area as a place to live by tenure.**  
 N = 162 to 212, N for Lambeth = 1238, N for UK average = 2020, N for comparable area = 193.

There was no data from comparable areas and UK to the questions "my local area is a better place to live compared to two years ago" and "the changes I see in my area benefit me and my family".

## Amenities and social infrastructure

**“Can’t understand why nobody never said anything about it. They’ve got fish in there and in summer it smells like fish, and they burn plastic off.”**

Resident at Bob Marley Road

**“I don’t like the criminality here, we need more cameras, street lights. There has been stabbing incidents (nightclubs)”**

African female council tenant, age 18-29 year

**“It is quiet and nice now, especially with lighting. Market is good, it brings money to area.”**

Caribbean male resident, age 70-79

“Amenities & Social Infrastructure” captures the services and the physical structures that are needed to support individual wellbeing and collective community activities, as well as local social life. It includes services such as health and education, transport and parks, as well as the impact of the design of the physical environment.

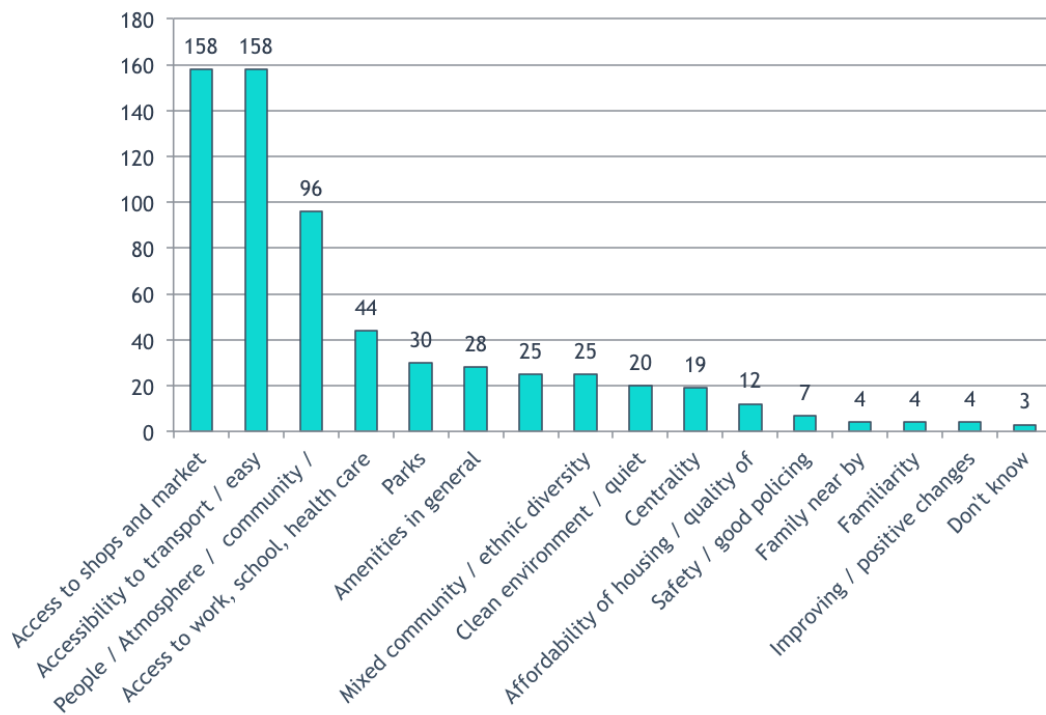
Residents described Somerleyton Road as well connected with good transport links to central London. Schools and shopping facilities were mentioned positively. However it was sometimes mentioned that there were few facilities that bring people together and many emphasised the lack of facilities for young people.

These findings are similar to the results of the 2015 Lambeth Council residents survey, which asked “what are the most important things making it [Lambeth] a good place to live”. Transport and amenities in general emerged as important factors. However the Somerleyton Road survey respondents put greater emphasis on “people, community and neighbours”, and the shops and market. Affordability of housing, safety and clean streets feature lower down the list of what people like about the place they live, compared to the borough wide survey.

There are also similarities with the 2015 residents survey data on “what are the things that most need improving” . However crime and safety are a larger concern for the Somerleyton Road survey respondents, compared to the borough as a whole.

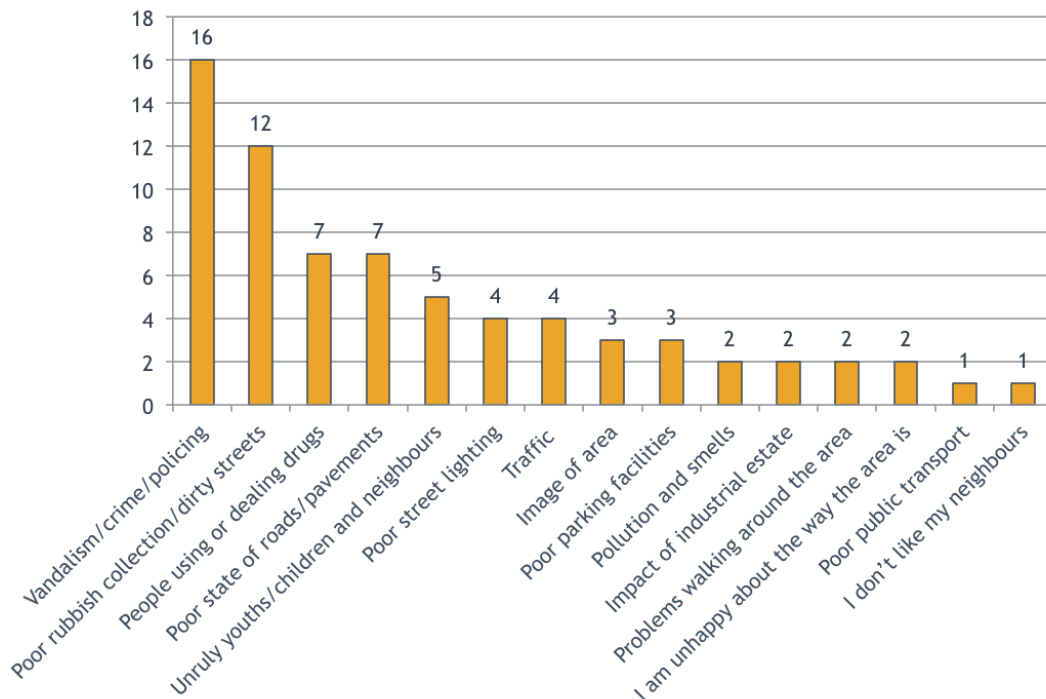
### The residents survey found that:

- the factors most frequently mentioned as contributing to residents’ quality of life are closeness to shops and the local market, as well as accessible infrastructure with bus, tube and train in a close proximity.
- closeness to amenities such as work, school, and health services and recreation facilities (as the cinema, restaurants and sports facilities) were also frequently mentioned.



**Figure 14: Residents responses to “Overall, what three factors about living in this neighbourhood contribute most to your quality of life?”**

N = 215



**Figure 15: Reason for being dissatisfied with the area (asked only of those who stated they were dissatisfied), individual respondents could give multiple answers**

N = 77

## Social and cultural life

“Social & Cultural Life” describes how residents feel about their life in an area. This includes their wellbeing, whether people feel they belong in the area, fear of crime, and relationships with neighbours and between different groups.

### Social contact and the sense of community

Residents described their local community as within bounded by the triangle created by the railway, Coldharbour Lane and Loughborough Park Road. The physical layout of the area creates a feeling of the triangle being “*very much an island*” (agency), as there are few reasons for people from outside the area to go through it. Organisations working with vulnerable people commented that “*although it is very central in Brixton people feel isolated*”. Agencies voiced the hope that the proposed new facilities for children and the wider community will provide a place for people to meet, seek advice and support. Some people commented that the activities at Six Brixton (the temporary community centre at Somerleyton Road that was open between 2014 and September 2015) and events in Somerleyton Road have opened the space more up and brought more people down the road.

*“New block workout and the flower things at Somerleyton Road is good, it gets people involved and get neighbours to talk together.”*  
(Caribbean female resident, age 18-29, Somerleyton Road)

Somerleyton Road was described as a social meeting point, where residents meet their neighbours (local agency, community organisations), “*It’s a place where people unite together like a family. You can speak to your neighbour and your neighbour knows you*” (Moorlands Estate resident). The road links the Moorlands estate to central Brixton, by foot or by the P5 bus.

The area was described as a “good” community and that “*people look after each other*” (community organisation, local agency). This also came out in the street interviews with residents and traders who described that, “*people help each other out*” (Trader, Coldharbour Lane).

*“I have good relationship with other shopkeepers around here. We share concerns, questions/problems. People talk to me and we help each other but there’s no official organisation”* (Trader, Coldharbour Lane)

*“Have Lived in Moorlands for 30 years. It’s quite good here, people know each other”* (Caribbean male resident, age 70-79, Somerleyton Road)

*“It’s nice, quiet, people know their neighbours and help each other.”*  
(African female council tenant, age 18-29)

**“Things going on on Somerleyton Road mean more people are coming into area.”**

Local agency

**“There is definitely a community feel. There are all different sorts of cultures – a strong community sense.”**

Local agency

Contact between residents is often described as light touch, rather than reflecting strong social relationships.

*“Feel that people generally stick to themselves. Everybody says hello and chitchat of course but generally stick to themselves.”* (Caribbean female housing association tenant, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate)

*“Yes, there is [a good community]. Have not made much friends, people keep to themselves. But small talk to people in the streets.”* (Black British female housing association resident, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate)

There is a feeling that the closeness of the community and social relations has changed over the years.

*“Community used to be different, in '94 all neighbours knew each other”* (Resident at Loughborough Park)

*“Neighbours are very good. In old days it was different. People are different now, less stability in community. People are less open and keeps secrets.”* (Male resident, age 70-79, Somerleyton Road)

*“Keep myself to myself - work, then come home.”* (Male private owner, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate)

*“Don't really think there is a community. Everybody is just doing their own job really.”* (Trader, Corry Drive)

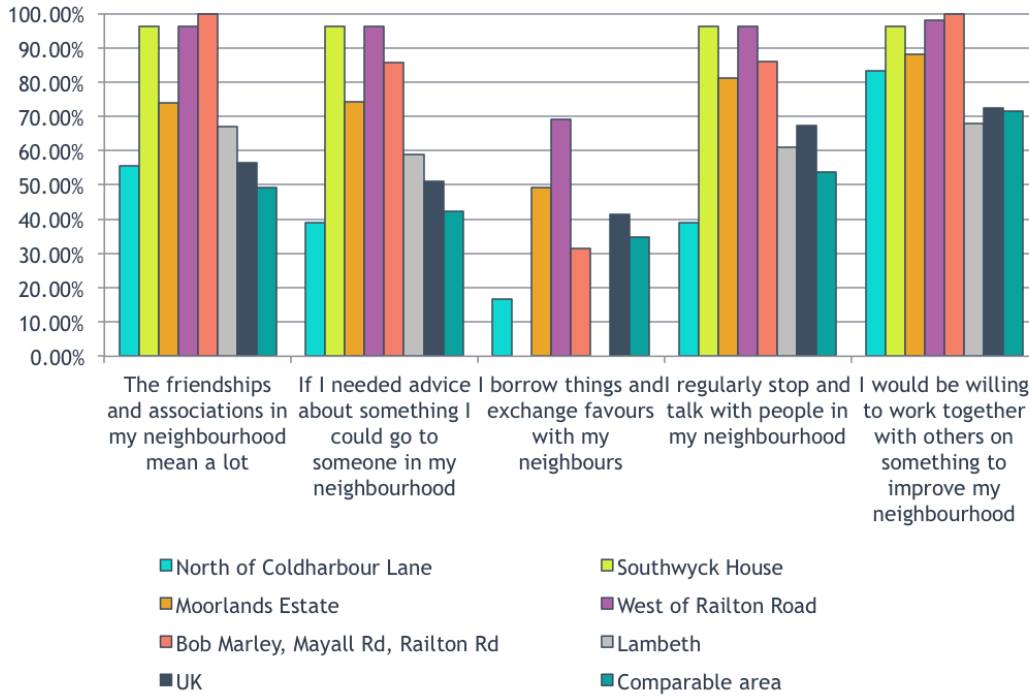
Residents spoke of past barbecues where everybody would meet, a youth centre and football pitches for the younger residents to use. But that there are now few facilities that bring people together.

Some residents described how the Southwyck House Tenants & Residents Association is trying to engage residents, *“it does not necessarily bring people together but it brings them out and you see and meet them more”* and there is a feeling that it is *“getting better”* (Southwyck House resident). Similarly the residents at Loughborough Park described how the new facilities have brought people together and created new conversations. They also voiced a need for good community spaces and regular activities where people can meet.

The Moorlands Estate and the surrounding areas were described as a community with a core of long-standing residents, *“who have lived here for many years, decades, generations even”* (local agency), although many reported that the population was becoming increasingly transient.

### **The residents survey found that:**

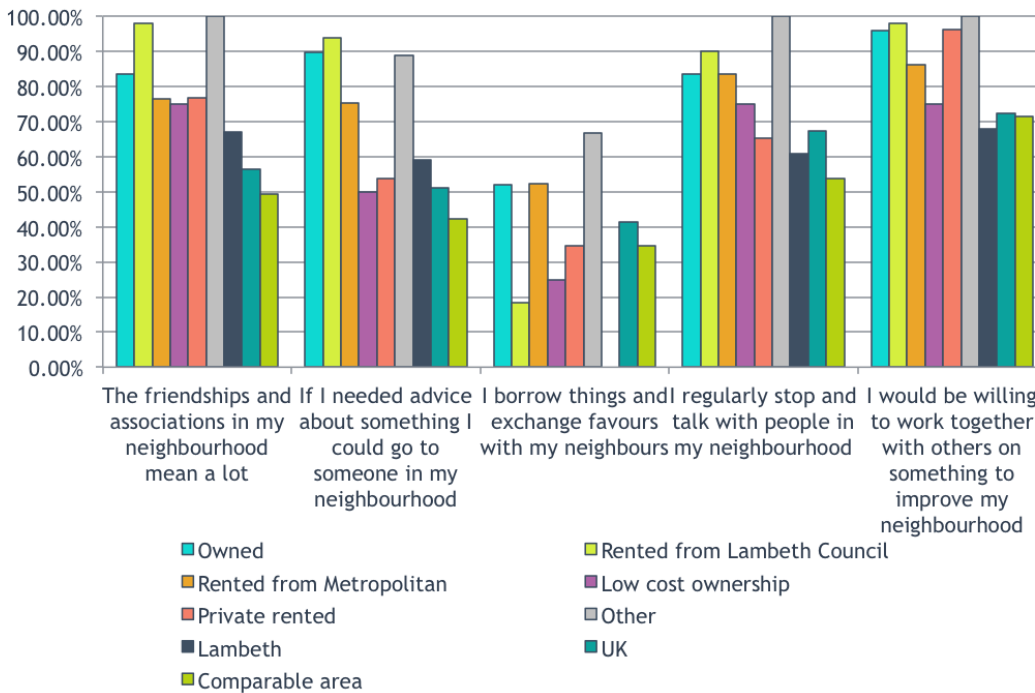
- residents feel a high sense of neighbourliness, generally higher than comparable areas as well as the UK average
- the area north of Coldharbour Lane reported a significantly lower sense of neighbourliness compared to the more established areas within the survey, and compared to the UK average and comparable areas.



**Figure 16: Residents' responses to questions on neighbourliness**

N = 210 - 217, Lambeth residents survey 2015 N = 1013, National average N = 40655 - 40663 and comparable area N = 1934 - 1937.

The question "I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours" was not included the Lambeth 2015 survey.



**Figure 17: Residents' responses to questions on neighbourliness**

N = 205 - 212, Lambeth residents survey 2015 N = 1013, National average N = 40655 - 40663, comparable area N = 1934 - 1937.

The question "I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours" was not included the Lambeth 2015 survey.



## Belonging

Alongside unease about change, there is a strong sense of belonging among residents and traders in the area, often linked to time spent in the area and affinity with the local facilities.

*“I feel like I belong in Brixton. When I first came here, it was difficult. You had to earn your stripes. I was a white man coming into a black area. I needed to gain trust. Now Brixton is a multicultural area, which is a healthy thing.”* (Trader, Atlantic Road)

A few commented that they did not feel they belonged, sometimes linking this to feeling “priced out” of the area, or because they had come to live in the area by chance.

*“I don’t feel safe nor feel like I belong. It’s somewhere I happen to live. It’s not my first choice but I was pleasantly surprised.”* (Black British female housing association resident, age 30-39, Moorlands Estate)

For some of the younger residents we spoke to, belonging was connected to the estate’s boundary and the border of ‘the triangle’, with perceptions of what lay outside as being less safe or not safe. Young people expressed a strong sense of belonging linked to social networks, such as friends, family, having grown up together, and having experiences with the residents on the estate,

*“Yes, right here is my area - I belong here. But not in Angel Town which is five minutes away”* (Black British male housing association tenant, age 18-29)

**“I feel part of the community, and know lots of shops, friends.”**

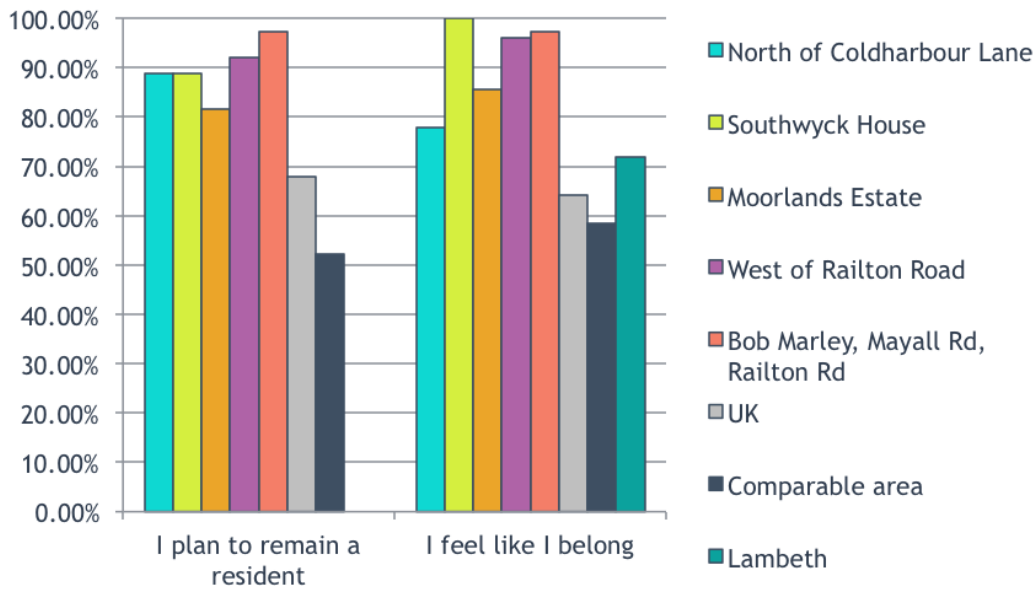
Trader, Brixton Village

**“Everyone know each other here - we went to school together or our parents know each other.”**

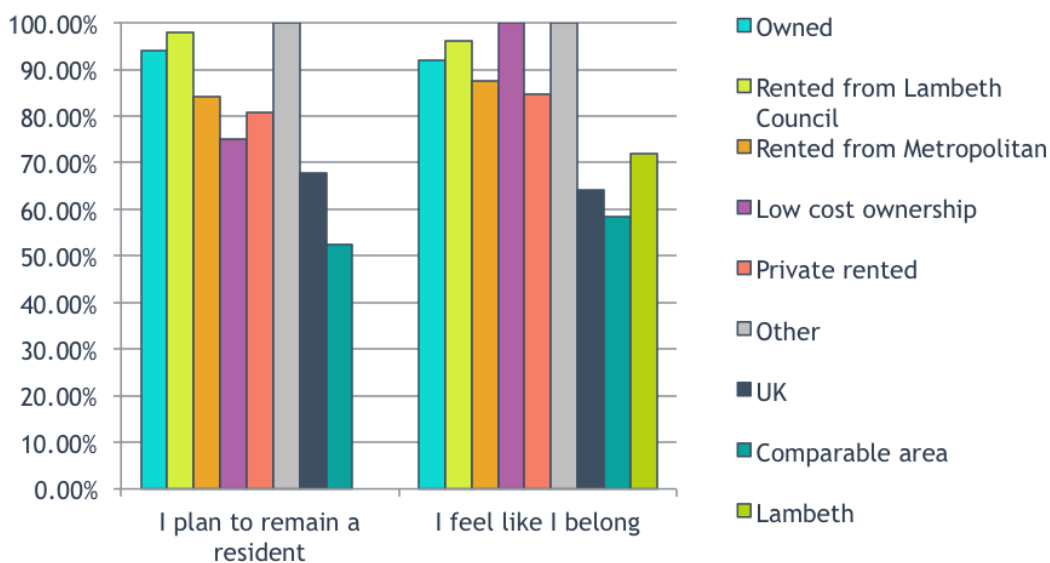
Black British male resident, age 18-29, Moorlands Estate

### The residents survey found that:

- there is a strong sense of belonging, 90% of residents plan to remain a resident in the area for a number of years, which is significantly higher than a comparable area and the UK average
- all areas reported a significantly higher rate of belonging than the borough average or comparable areas
- the highest percentages of residents that feel they belong were living in Southwyck House, Bob Marley Estate, Myall Road and the area west of Railton Road. The area north of Coldharbour Lane showed the lowest rate of belonging followed by the Moorlands Estate
- people renting from Lambeth Council, and the small number of people who classified their tenure as “other” reported strongest attachments to the area.



**Figure 18: Residents' responses to "I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years" N = 213, to the question "I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood", N = 216. Lambeth 2014 survey N = 1013, UK N = 40636 - 40664, comparable area N = 1934 - 1936**



**Figure 19: Residents' responses according to tenure to "I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years" N = 208, to the question "I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood" N = 211. Lambeth 2014 survey N = 1013, UK N = 40636 - 40664, comparable area N = 1934 - 1936**

## Relationships between different groups

Somerleyton Road and the surrounding areas are described as mixed with “*all different sorts of cultures*” (local agency). Residents spoke of how people from different backgrounds get on well and there is a feeling that people respect different ethnicities.

Historically the area has gone through changes reflecting waves of migration to London (including from Ireland and then the Caribbean). Residents positively described increasing diversity in recent years with more Asian, European and African residents moving to the area.

*“I like that there are different ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds - something everybody can relate to.”* (African female council tenant, age 18-29)

Residents spoke of the “Brixton spirit” of diversity and multiculturalism, and how this defines the local community. Brixton’s history was often mentioned as a binding factor between residents. This can however create some divisions between new and longer standing residents. We spoke to residents who had lived in the area for five to eight years, who still categorise themselves as “new”. Some older residents spoke of their fears that the “Brixton spirit” is under threat from new more affluent residents.

*“There is sense of losing originality, sense of loosing community in Brixton. The ethnic minority that gave Brixton name in the first place gets kicked out.”* (Black British female housing association tenant, age 30-39, Moorlands Estate)

Fears voiced often focused on the changing shops and restaurants, particularly evening and night facilities. Some described a lack of investment in creating and supporting facilities for the “old” community.

*“It is only reflecting influx coming in but not culture here. And then it is impossible to integrate and will alienate people living in area already when they see there is nothing for them, nothing to reflect in.”* (Resident at Loughborough Park).

### The residents survey found that:

- people feel that residents from different background get on well and that people respect ethnic differences
- residents living in the area surrounding Somerleyton Road have a significantly higher experience of residents from different backgrounds getting on well than in a comparable area and the UK average
- relationships between groups appear to be stronger in the survey area than in comparable areas or Lambeth as a whole
- people living north of Coldharbour Lane or on the Moorlands Estate voiced slightly less confidence that differences were respected or that different groups get on well.

### **“I like the diversity.”**

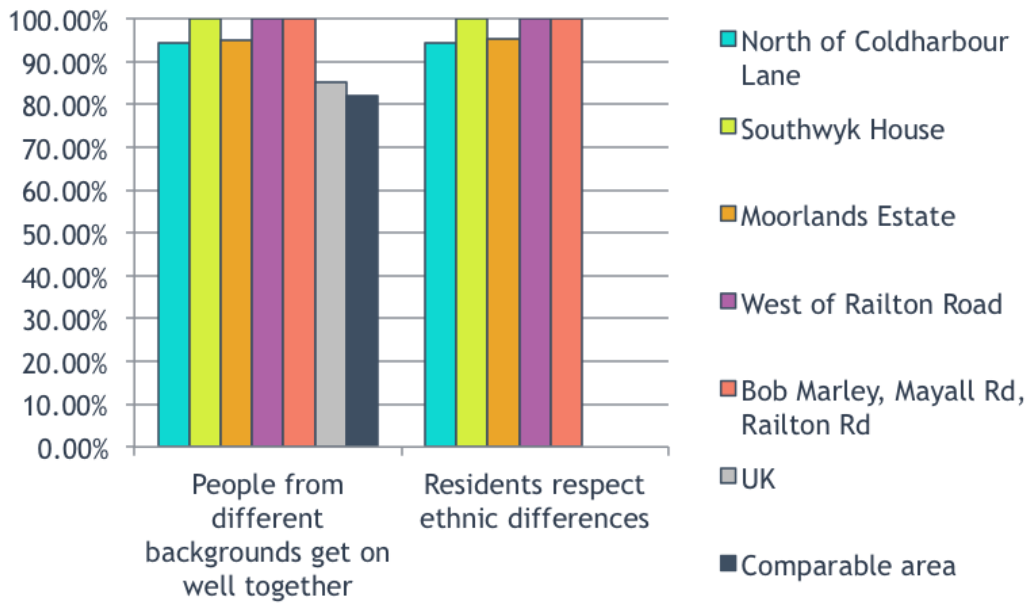
Black Caribbean female housing association resident, age 60-69, Moorlands Estate

### **“Brixton is unique - a tapestry of mixture of people and culture. The changes that are happening now may dilute Brixton’s character”**

Trader, Atlantic Road

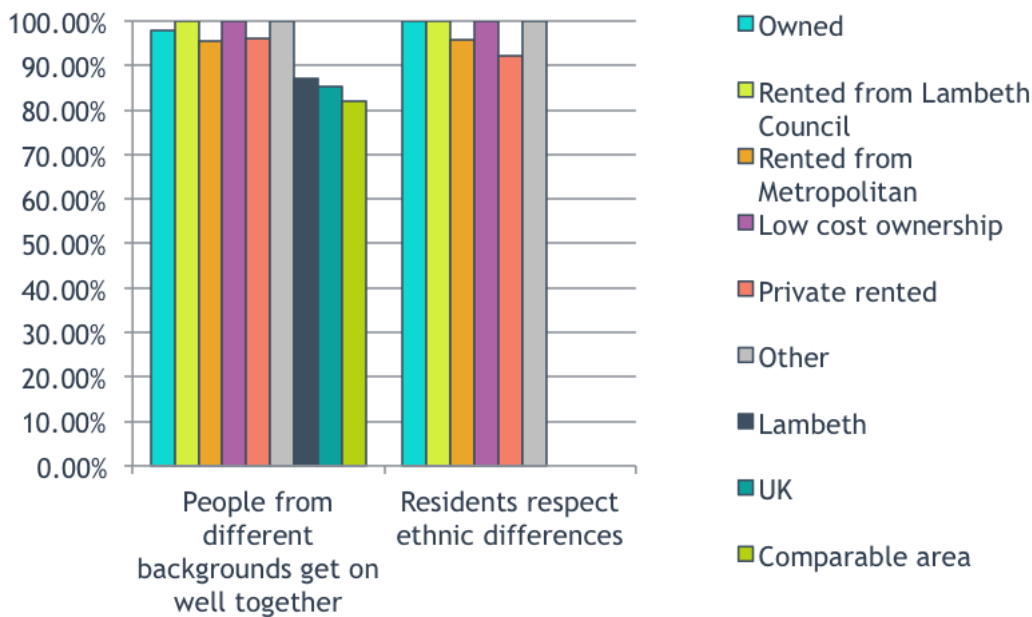
### **“The area has improved but less locals. New people are coming into area and local community is not benefiting. There’s nothing for the community.”**

Black Caribbean female housing association tenant, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate



**Figure 20: Residents' response to questions of integration/cohesion by area**

N = 213 to 218, Lambeth 2015 survey N=1238, UK average N=1818 and comparable area N=169. There was no data for the question "residents respect ethnic differences" for the UK average, comparable area and Lambeth.



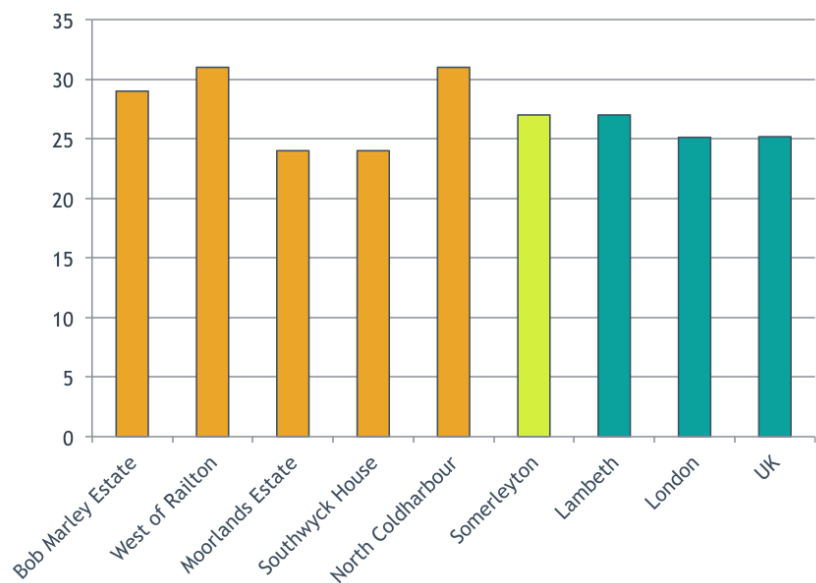
**Figure 21: Residents' response to questions of integration/cohesion by tenure**

N = 208 to 212, Lambeth 2015 survey N = 1238, UK average N = 1818 and comparable area N = 169. There was no data for to the question "residents respect ethnic differences" for the UK average, comparable area and Lambeth.

## Wellbeing

Wellbeing was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh scale. This was developed to enable measure wellbeing in the general population, and to evaluate projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. There is comparable data for Lambeth and for London.

The survey data found that wellbeing amongst residents surveyed was the same as the Lambeth average, and slightly higher than the London average. However when the data is analysed by smaller areas, residents on the Moorlands Estate and living in Southwyck house emerge as having lower wellbeing than the area average.



**Figure 22: Wellbeing scores by small areas (using Short Warwick-Edinburgh scale)**

N = 166, London N = 5224, UK N = 38395, Lambeth 2015 residents survey N = 1238

## Safety

In the past the area has had a bad reputation, it was described by agencies as a “no-go zone”, characterised by gang related crime. A younger resident commented that, “*throughout the last 15 years it has changed. When I was young there was so much to do, ‘so much’ as in animosity and hating. It was quite hectic. Brixton is known for gangs ... as it used to be we couldn’t come out of estate*” (Black British male resident, age 18-29).

However, there is a widespread feeling that the area feels safer with less crime, particularly improving over the last five or ten years. This was reported in both interviews with agencies and organisations working in the area and in street interviews with traders and residents.

*“It has improved an awful lot. When I first moved in it was not safe. You couldn’t go down Somerleyton Road alone after it got dark.”*  
(Loughborough Park resident)

However, some residents still report that the area is unsafe, though this is sometimes attributed to people coming from outside Brixton

*“Would say ‘ish’ - but not safe. But where is safe?”* (Male private owner, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate)

*“Most problems are with people coming from outside because they have heard about the famous Brixton”* (Caribbean male resident, age 70-79, Somerleyton Road)

Traders, especially on Coldharbour Lane, reported seeing fights between young people, and are more hesitant about going down Somerleyton Road and in the area during after dark, but have no problems with the area during the day. A community group at the Moorlands Estate agreed that, “*it has calmed down from what it was. But there are still gangs*”. One agency reported that there are still gang elements but that they feel they have control of the situation.

It was reported that the area “*can be a hot spot*” but that the main issues on Somerleyton Road is street drinking, smoking and drugs: “*There’s a lot of problems with street drinking in and around the area [Somerleyton Road]. There’s a spill-over effect, coming from the night life economy, where people walk down Coldharbour Lane*” (agency).

One resident from Loughborough Park stated, “*I actually don’t believe the crime has improved. It has just moved to different pockets.*”

**“There were a lot of criminal activities -- drugs and prostitutions. Now I heard lawyers and solicitors live around there.”**

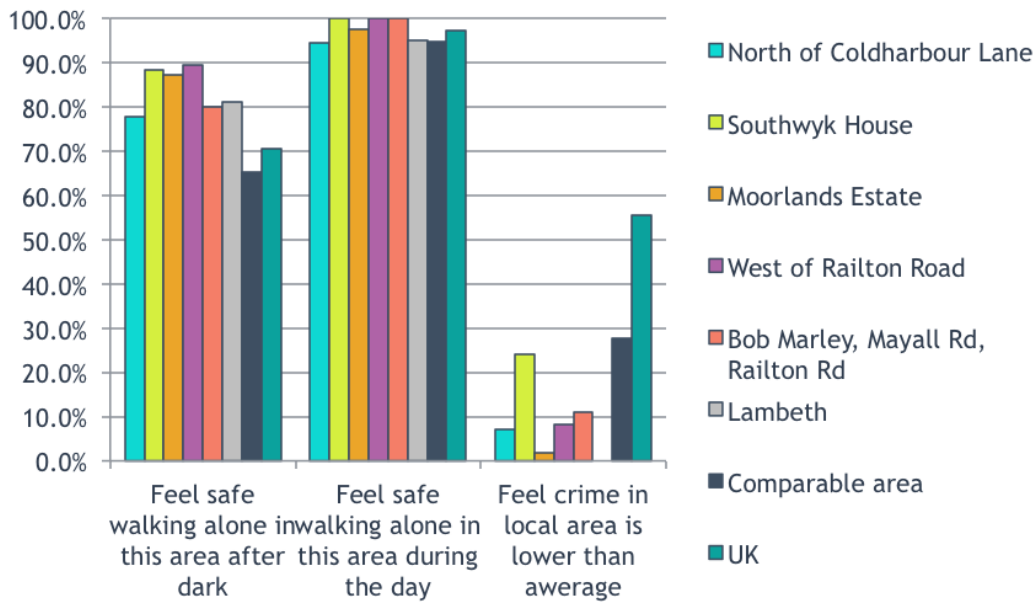
Trader at Atlantic Road

**“There has been change from reputation of being a dangerous area to an area of amiable spirit.”**

Male resident, age 50-59

### **The residents survey found that:**

- a high number of residents feel safe in the area both during the day and during the night
- sense of safety after dark and during the day is similar to the Lambeth average
- residents feelings of safety after dark are higher than in comparable areas
- residents feel that their area is less safe than the national average, compared to residents of comparable areas
- when broken down by small areas, people living north of Coldharbour Lane reported feeling less safe
- people living north of Coldharbour Lane or on the Moorlands estate voiced slightly less confidence that differences were respected or that different groups get on well
- residents in low-cost ownership and private tenants feel less safe during the night than other tenures and the Lambeth average but are similar to a comparable area
- there is a significant group of residents living in low-cost ownership who feel less safe than other tenures.



**Figure 23: Perceptions of crime by area**

N = 148 to 218, comparable area N = 342 to 374, UK N = 8302 to 9091, Lambeth 2015 residents survey N = 1238  
 The Lambeth residents survey 2015 did not include the question about levels of crime compared to the national average.



**Figure 24: Perceptions of crime by tenure**

N = 148 to 218, number of responses for comparable area vary from 342 to 374, UK N= 8302 to 9091, Lambeth 2015 survey N = 1238



## Voice and influence

“Voice & influence” explores the extent to which residents feel they have control over the environment in which they live, either through taking part in formal groups or forums, or more informal activism. It captures how residents are involved in local groups and volunteering, how they take action to improve their area, as well as whether they feel their day to day issues are taken up by agencies and institutions.

Residents and traders often reported feelings of powerlessness and spoke of their experience of having little control over what is happening in their local area. However, the residents survey showed that this experience is dependent on where the residents live and their tenure status. People living in Southwyck House and north of Coldharbour Lane have a higher sense of influence than would be expected in a comparable area, whereas residents of the Moorlands Estate, west of Railton Road and Bob Marley Estate are have a lower sense of influence than what would be expected from a comparable area.

Negative views about control were related to fears about the character of the area, local facilities closing down and perceptions that longstanding residents are being pushed out of the area. These changes in the broader area impacted on how residents feel about the new development.

*“It is not a thing where we have a say. If we would have control it wouldn’t be like this”* (Black British male resident, age 18-29)

**“It feels like  
a community  
under threat ...  
there is less of a  
community voice”**

Local agency

### The residents survey found that:

- the results for the Moorlands Estate, west of Railton Road and Bob Marley Road, Mayall Road and Railton Road showed a majority do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area, almost 75% of residents in the three areas disagreed or tended to disagree that they could influence decisions
- in Southwyck House and north of Coldharbour Lane the results were different, with a majority tending to agree or definitively agreeing that they had influence over the area
- people renting from Lambeth Council or Metropolitan and in low cost ownership feel they have less influence than people owning their house or living in private rented or other accommodation.

*“How can you have control? You can protest as much as you will but once they’ve decided on something you cannot change government’s plans” (Black Caribbean female housing estate tenant, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate)*

This was also apparent on local online forums. Some residents spoke about a feeling of not being consulted and their voice not being taken into consideration.

*“I live in Southwyck House, directly adjacent to Somerleyton Road. I don’t feel the residents have been consulted at all up until now.” (Online forum)*

*“From what I see the main influence people may have is on some aspects of design. Apart from that real influence is limited. I did make comments that I thought the site was being overdeveloped. I questioned the high density of housing and what affect that may have on people who live there. Was told it had to be that high density to make the scheme financially viable. So that’s one instance where input is limited by parameters set by the Council.” (Online forum)*

Some residents in the street interviews viewed holding or attending events as an effective way of impacting on the area. Others felt that they would not be listened to, that there would not be enough information, and voiced mistrust of the local authorities and decision makers. *“They have already done the deal between Lambeth and developers, so what can you do?” (White British male housing association tenant, age 60-69, Moorlands Estate).*

For traders, the impact of rent increases for the shops in the Railway Arches and the number of established shops closing down in the local area coloured their views. Many of the long-term shop-owners we spoke to felt that priority is being put on incoming rather than existing facilities.

*“How can you ask somebody who have given their entire life to move? It is not fair. How can you have control? The council doesn’t listen to us.” (Trader on Atlantic Road)*

Agencies commented how residents’ personal uncertainties (about housing security, cut in benefits and immigration status) affect their ability to participate in local activities. Agencies also described the area as “disinvested”, and how this has compounded mistrust and the sense of powerlessness. It was hoped that the new facilities will signal that the community is valued, with a spill-over effect benefitting the current community.

**“This parade has  
been left to die”**

Trader on Coldharbour  
Lane

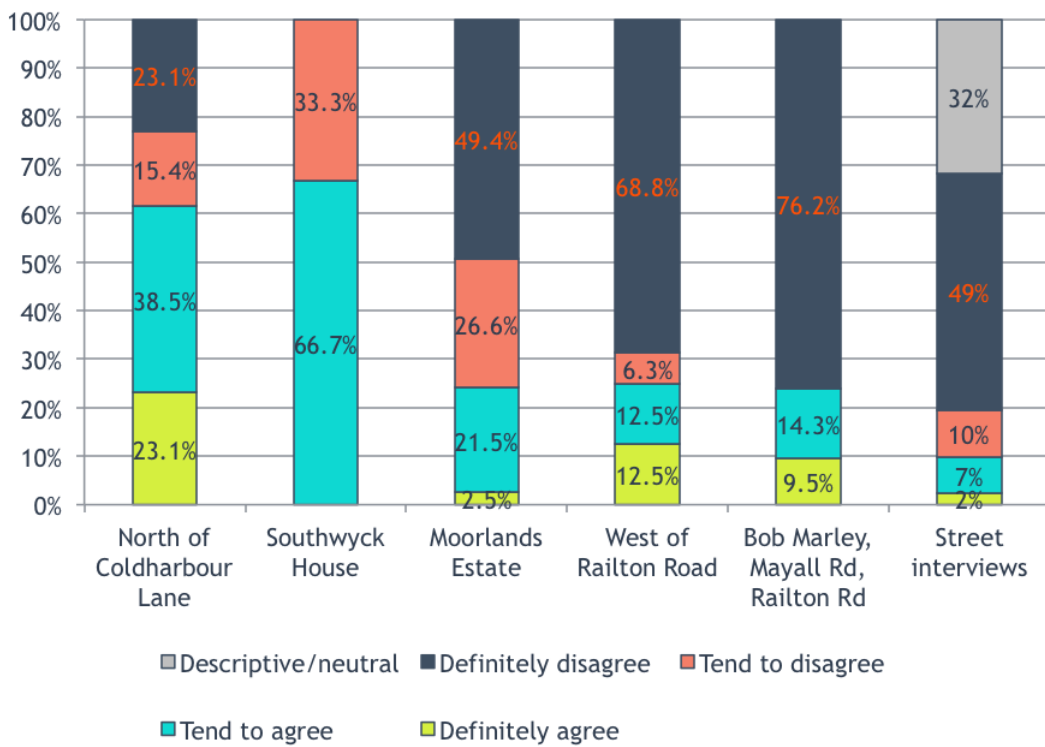


Figure 25: Residents' response to "Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?" according to area including answers from street interviews  
N = 188

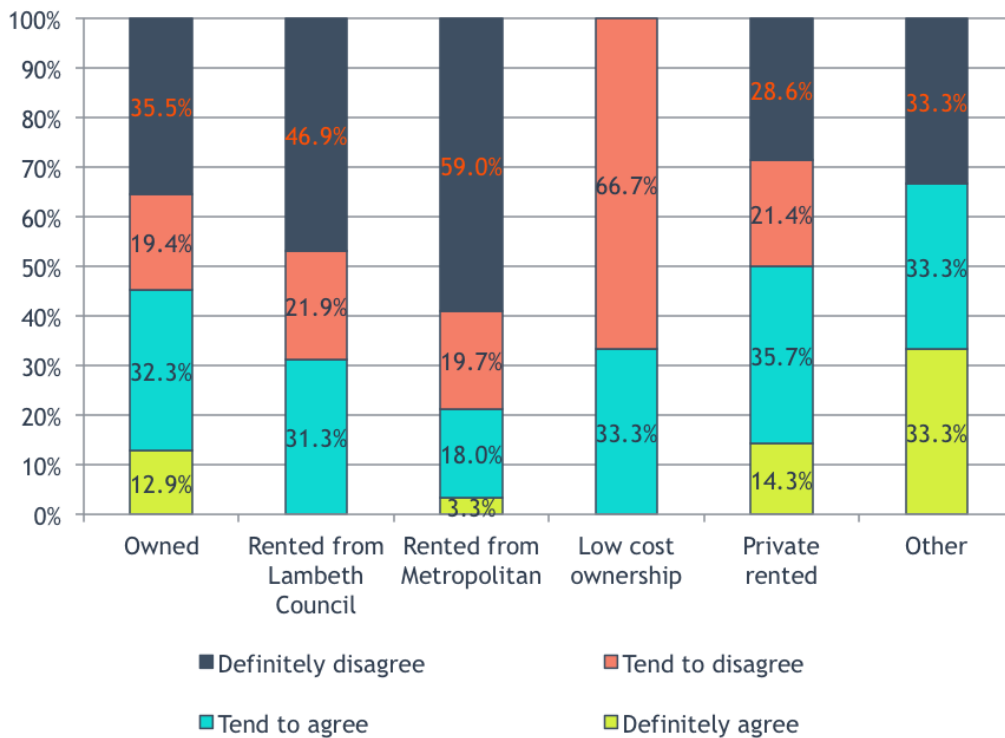


Figure 26: Residents' response to "Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?" according to tenure  
N = 144

# Adaptability and resilience

Adaptability and resilience is future facing, it describes the capacities in individuals, and in the wider community and infrastructure, that enable residents to adapt to changing circumstances and to be resilient, to bounce back in the face of adversity.

**F**inancial security is an important aspect of resilience. The majority of people surveyed felt they were managing financially, and with paying their housing costs. However, there are more people struggling with their finances on the Moorlands Estate and in Southwyck House than in the other small areas. Tenants of Metropolitan Housing report more difficulties than other tenures, but some owner occupiers and private renters also report that they are finding it very difficult to get by.

More people living on the Moorlands estate and in Southwyck House are unemployed than in the other small areas. There are more people who describe themselves as long term sick or disabled living in the areas with the largest proportion of social housing (Southwyck House, the Moorlands Estate or the Bob Marley Estate).

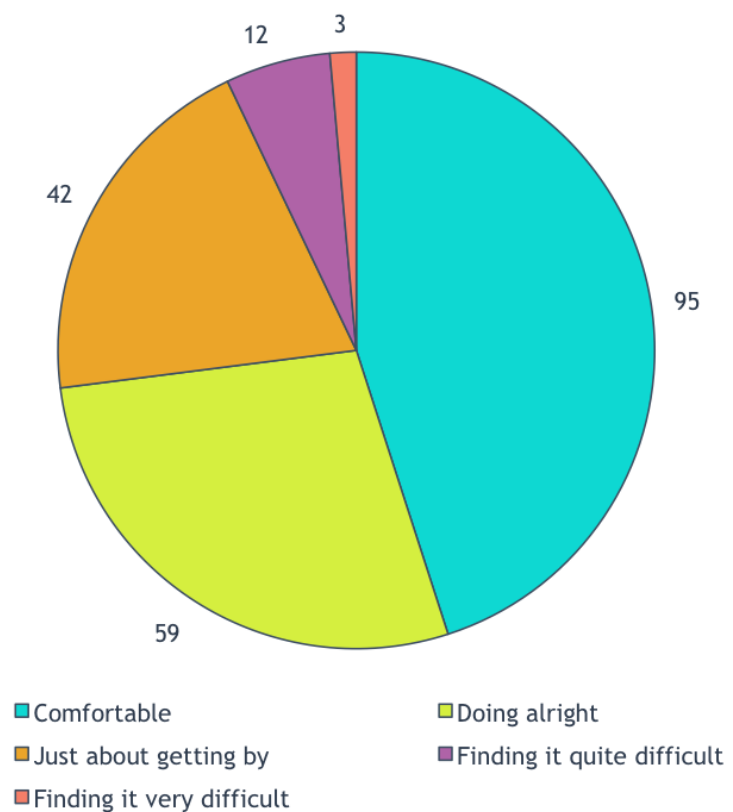


Figure 27: Responses to “how well are you managing financially these days?”

N = 211

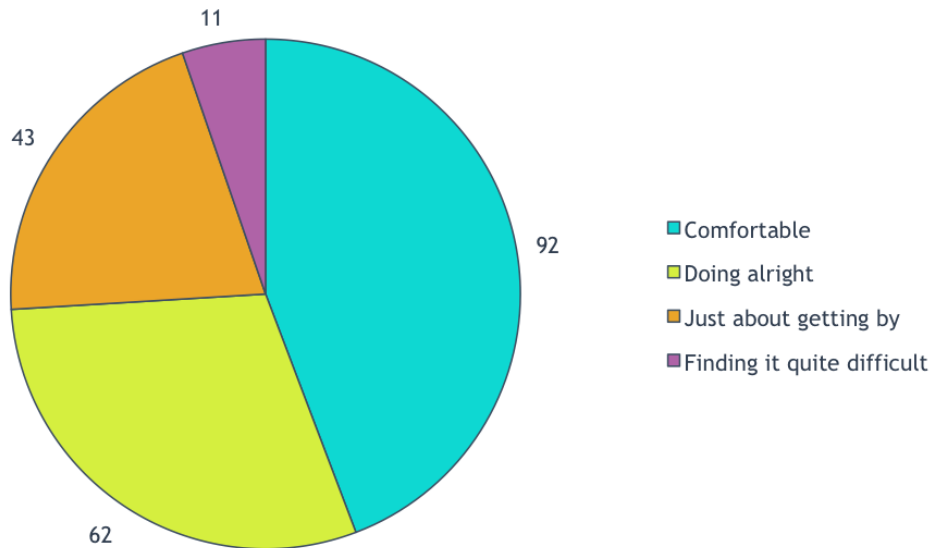


Figure 28: Responses to “how well are you managing with paying for your housing costs these days?”  
N = 208

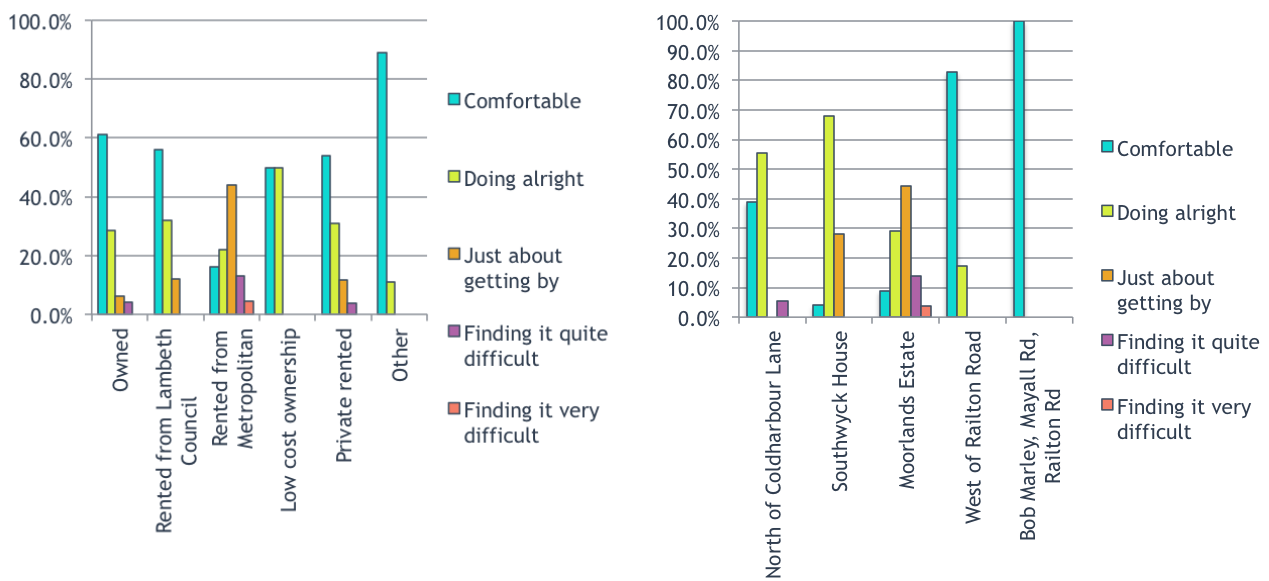


Figure 29: Responses to “how well are you managing financially these days?” by smaller area and by tenure  
Smaller area N = 211, tenure N = 206

Many agencies and community organisations working in the area spoke of increasing transience, another factor that may undermine resilience. Different reasons were given for this including recent benefit cuts, rising house prices in the area, and immigration status. This precariousness feeds into people’s sense of control over their lives and their willingness to take part in local activities and to engage in change in the area.

*“There was a core community but now a lot more coming and going”* (community organisation)

*“Families move in, but can’t stay because of status.”* (Local agency)

The level of unease about the social and demographic change in Brixton described in earlier sections, and the questions frequently raised about agencies attitudes to Brixton’s longer term communities also affects people’s wellbeing and resilience.

All the these different aspects are likley to disproportionately affect people on lower incomes. Private tenants on low incomes may be particularly vulnerable because of their housing insecurity. The data suggests that many residents of the Moorlands Estate and Southwyck House face particularly challenges in terms of their resilience to future change.

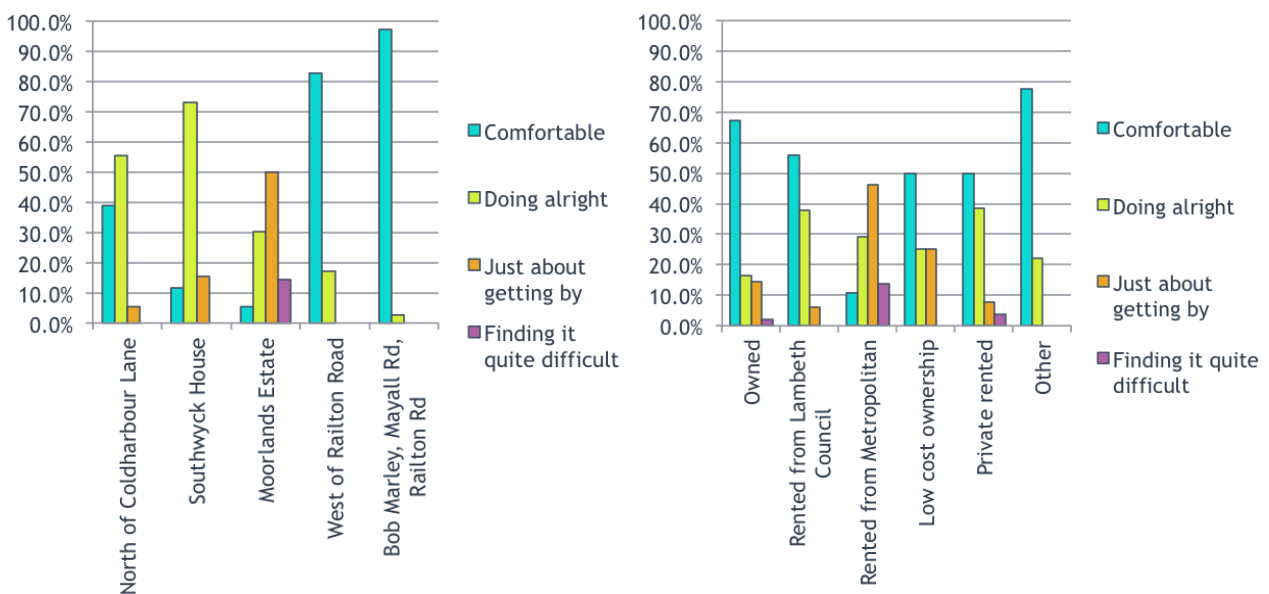


Figure 30: Responses to “how well are you managing with paying for your housing costs these days?” by smaller area and tenure

Smaller area N = 208 and tenure N = 203

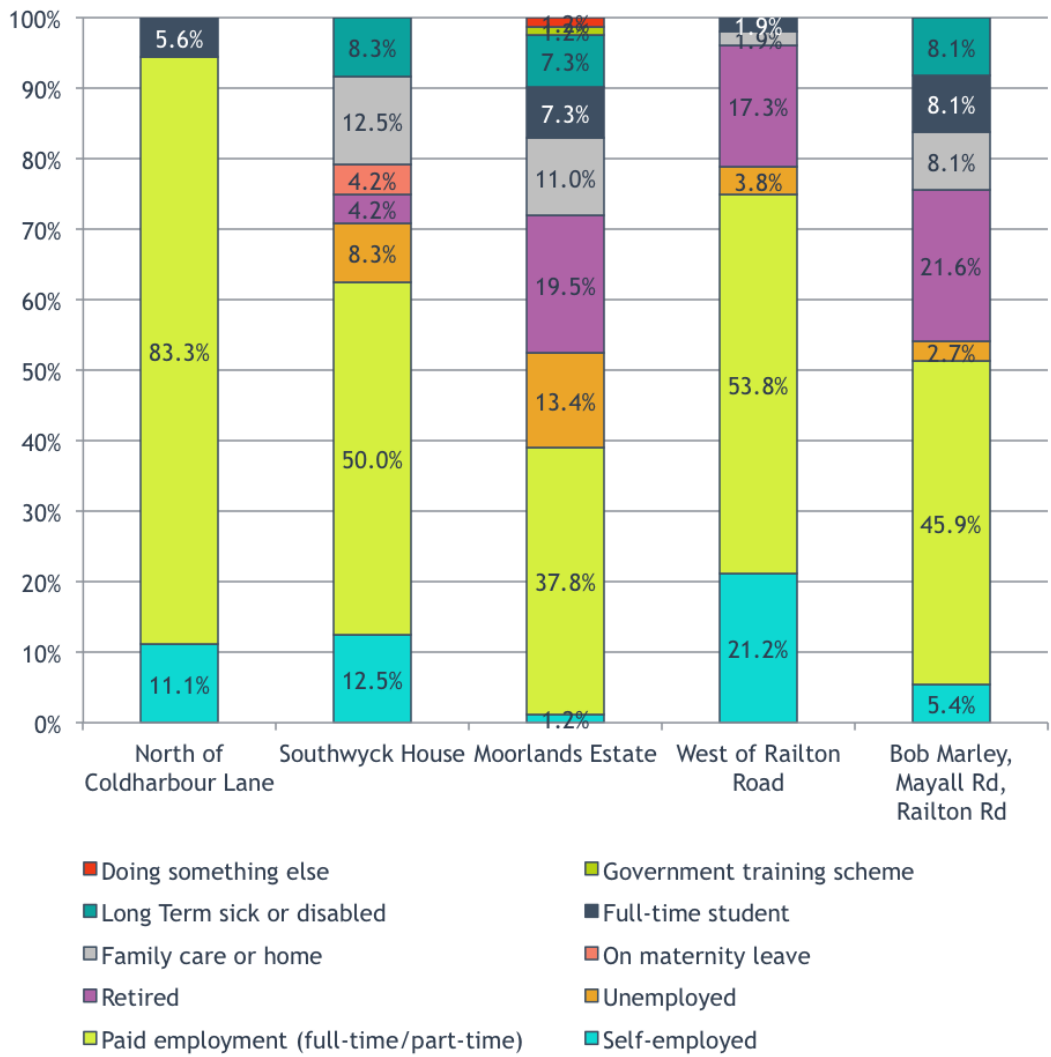


Figure 31: Employment status by small area  
N = 213

# Feelings about the development

**T**his section describes how people feel about the development plans. It summarises how people responded to questions about what they know about the plans, how they feel about the plans, and how they feel about the process of community involvement and engagement over the past five years.

## Knowledge about the redevelopment plans

During the development of the plans for Somerleyton Road, different forms of engagement have been used including meetings at Six Brixton, street parties, community events and leaflets distributed to households in the area surrounding Somerleyton Road. A series of deliberative workshops were also convened in 2013.

The street interviews were semi-structured, and this meant that conversations were able to pursue different directions. Discussions about the development often shifted to changes in the area, what was going on at Guinness Trust, the Railway Arches, the temporary community centre at Somerleyton Road and gentrification.

26 out of 41 people who took part in street interviews said that they felt informed, ranging from knowing something will take place on the street to having received leaflets, having heard about the plans from friends or neighbours, or attended meetings. Seven people said that they had received no information, eight were unclear in their answers.

When speaking to local organisations and agencies in the area, opinions diverged on whether residents have been involved or not in developing plans for Somerleyton Road. Some reported a feeling that people have received leaflets and that people generally know about the redevelopment. Others felt that residents have not been involved, or that certain groups - some specifically mentioned the Caribbean community - have not been involved.

### The residents survey found that:

- almost half answered that they know nothing or don't know about the development plans, half said they know a little or some information and a small minority said they know a lot about the development plans
- residents from the Moorlands Estate were most informed
- the least informed areas were Southwyck House and the area west of Railton Road, where almost a third said that they knew nothing about the development
- a small number (3%) had attended meetings about the development, none of the residents we spoke to from the areas north of Coldharbour Lane and Southwyck House have attended meetings.

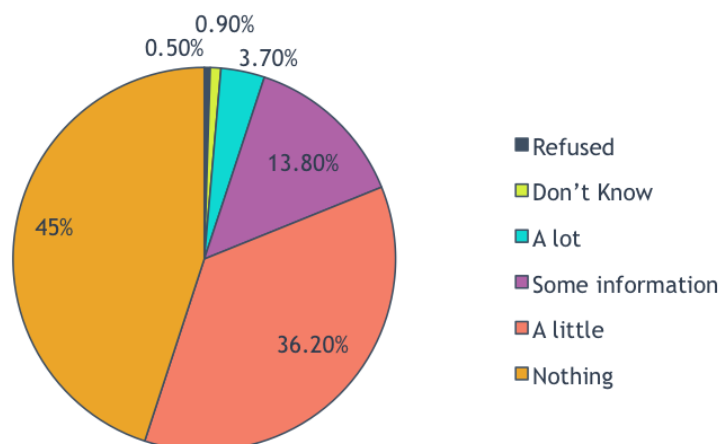


Agencies who work closely with residents on the Moorlands Estate argued that one of the reasons why many residents have not engaged is that people do not feel it has anything to do with them as it will not impact on their housing situation. As an interviewee argued, “*I don’t think residents have a feel about it. They think “I just need to prepare myself for it.”*” (local agency).

A lot of the residents we spoke to in the street interviews commented that they had received leaflets through their doors about the project, some stated that this had informed them, others said that they do not read leaflets and that this was not the best way to contact residents.

Local agencies working in the statutory and third sector reported feeling included in discussions and well informed about the development with some being involved in designing the new facilities. Community organisations we spoke to felt informed about the development but were less likely to report feeling included in the formation of the plans. One community organisation argued that: “*If someone is not inviting you, you keep away*”. Well publicised disputes about the use and management of Six Brixton strongly coloured some interviewees views. Other community groups reported mixed experiences of being able to challenge local decisions in the past.

Some local agencies effectively opted out of the research by not taking up repeated invitations to be interviewed.



**Figure 32: Residents’ responses to “How much do you know about the redevelopment plans”**

N = 218

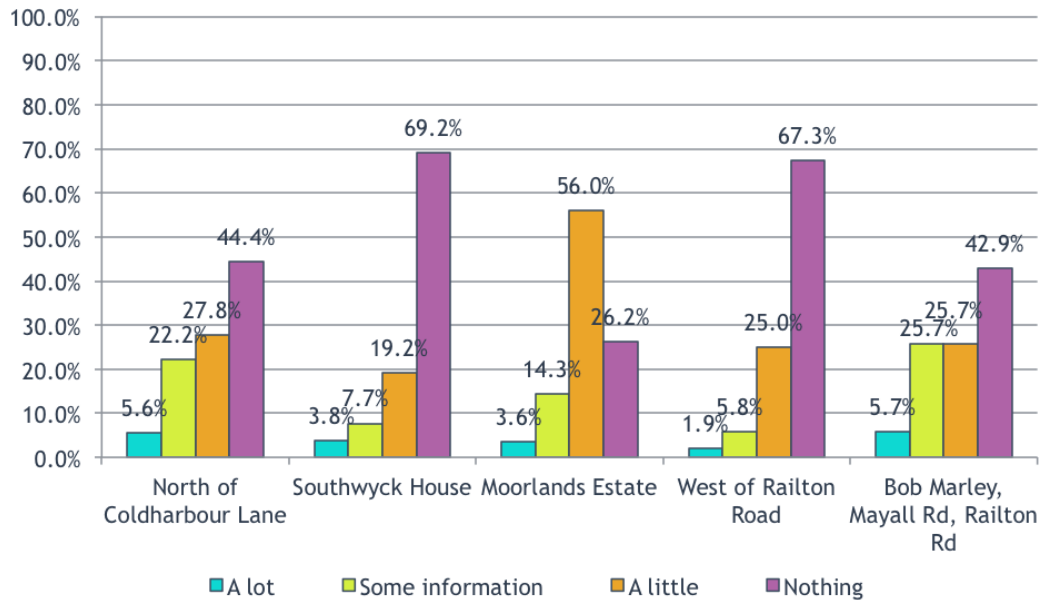


Figure 33: Residents' responses to "How much do you know about the redevelopment plans" according to area N = 217

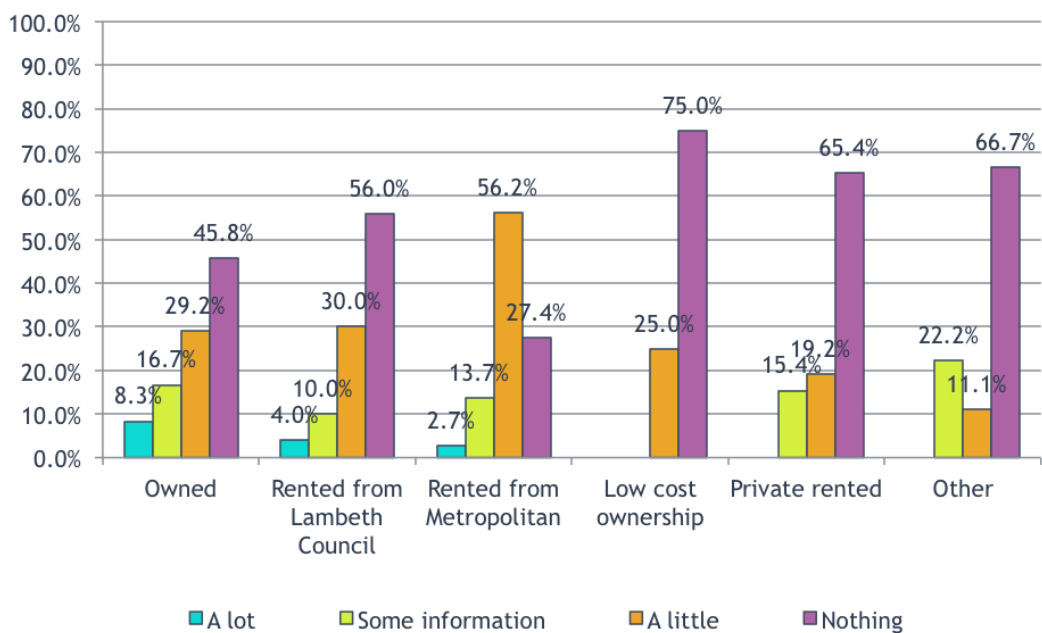
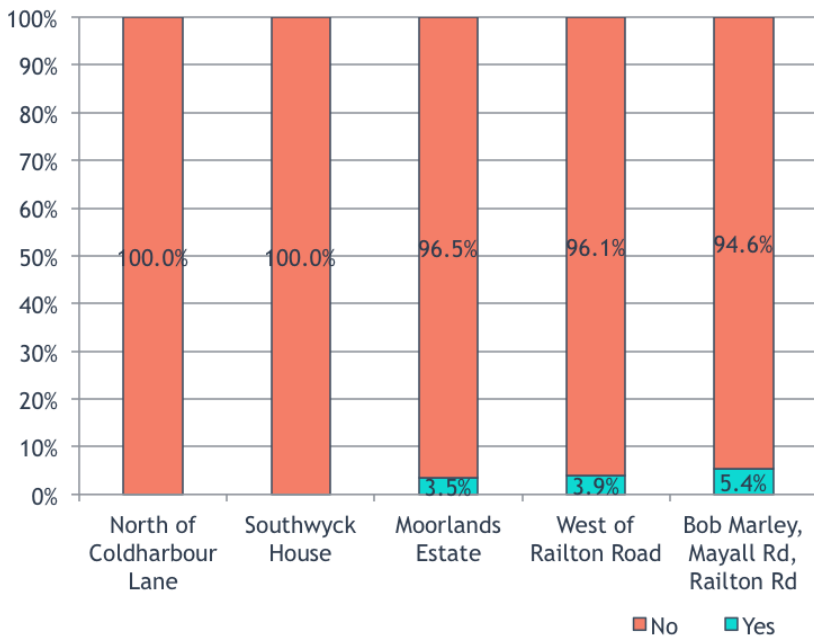
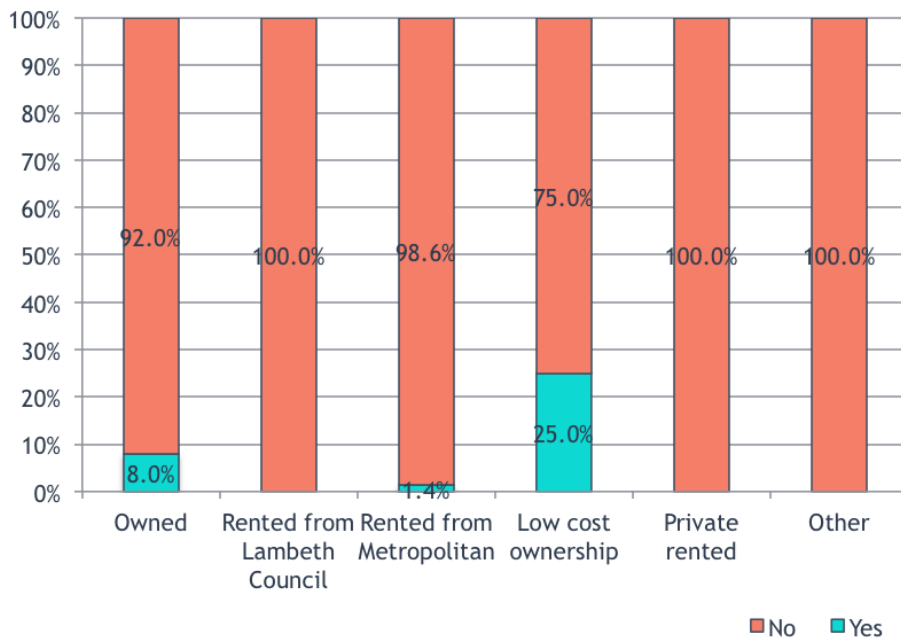


Figure 34: Residents' responses to "How much do you know about the redevelopment plans" according to tenure N = 210



**Figure 35: Residents' response to "Have you attended meetings/events that provide information about the Somerleyton Road project in the past 12 months?" according to small area**  
 N = 217



**Figure 36: Residents' response to "Have you attended meetings/events that provide information about the Somerleyton Road project in the past 12 months?" according to tenure**  
 N = 212

## Feelings about the development

Interviews with agencies and residents revealed a similar pattern: those who were in favour of the Somerleyton Road development were more likely to focus on what they knew of the development itself; whilst those who were unhappy with it or opposed were more likely to speak about their reservations about different partners and the process of engagement to date.

The theatre was welcomed favourably, people spoke with confidence about how this would be a welcome asset to Brixton.

Overall people welcomed the improvements to the road, there was a strong positive feeling that something was being done about the site. Several commented on how the area now was derelict and blighted by the odour in the summer of stored fish. *“It’s about time, something constructive. I am glad that someone is doing something about Somerleyton Road”* (Black African female housing association tenant, age 30-39). Another argued that, *“change is good. It can’t be like this forever. They need to modernise the area”* (Black Caribbean male private renter, age 18-29). One respondent to the residents survey hoped that the development would make the Moorlands estate *“a bit better and decent”*.

The development was also viewed positively as a way of improving the area’s reputation: *“New flats will change the name. People will not look at Brixton and Moorlands as fault lines but more as a nice place to live”* (Caribbean male resident, age 70-79, Somerleyton Road). This sentiment was less prevalent among young residents, who feel insecure about their future prospects in the area. A younger resident commented that, *“for my age it is changing, it is a bit too much of a change”* (Black British male resident, age 18-29).

Agencies were positive about the new community facilities. In the interviews residents often spoke positively about new community

**“Change is good. It can’t be like this forever. They need to modernise the area”**

Black Caribbean male private renter, age 18-29

### The residents survey found that:

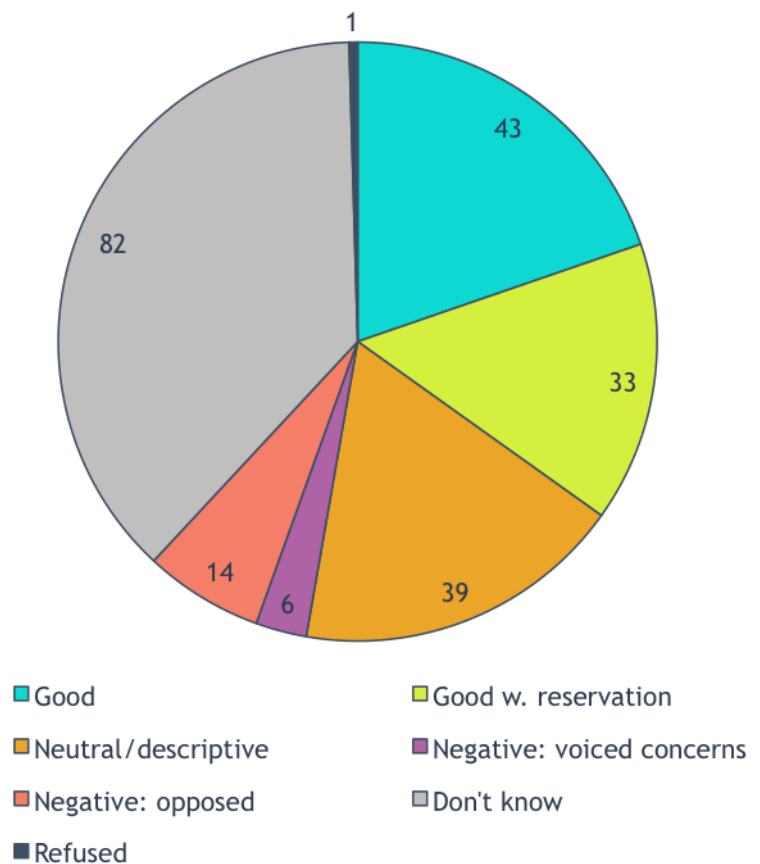
- over a third of the residents interviewed were positive about the development plan, a similar number were unsure or did not know
- of those who were who were positive overall, almost half voiced some reservations about how the new development would impact on the community
- there were some concerns that the development would make house prices go up in the surrounding area as well as make the area feel overcrowded, possibly increasing crime and instability
- out of the people who were negative about the scheme, almost half voiced more general concerns, for example fearing the new development would change lifestyles, whilst more than a half reported clear opposition
- around one in five gave neutral or descriptive answers.

facilities and services, the combined children’s centre and nursery and medical centre were mentioned with appreciation.

Few agencies, residents, community groups or traders commented on the proposed community ownership models.

Generally, the aspirations that people voiced about the development, particularly that it would provide housing for people living in the area and new facilities for the community, are reflected in the actual plans. However many of those voicing opposition did not believe that plans would be implemented in practice, or did not know about the detail of what had been agreed.

The street interviews allowed lengthy discussions about how residents feel about the new development. Within the conversations different themes emerged, focusing on the area’s reputation, facilities for young people, displacement of residents and concerns about infrastructure.



*Figure 37: Residents’ responses to “From what you know about the plans for the redevelopment, what do you think?”*

N = 218

Fears were voiced about displacement *“it is going to be expensive, not for people here and that is unfair.”* (Black British male resident, age 18-29, Moorlands Estate), *“I don’t want another gated area where we are cut out from [pointed towards the new development next to Brixton Village]. I want something accessible, affordable -- something the local community can use.”* (Black Caribbean female council tenant, age 30-39) and *“new people are coming into the area and the local community is not benefiting. There’s nothing for the community. Traders and businesses are suffering.”* (Black Caribbean female housing association tenant, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate)

Fears of displacement were seen as disproportionately affecting the Black community. *“Gentrification has been going on in community, but only thing but only thing where I have seen it really is in the indoor Market. There are not so many black shops anymore.”* (Black British female council tenant, age 50-59) *“Have heard plan, think they want to get rid of the blacks”* (Male, Bob Marley Estate). And, *“There used to be more ethnic shops but now other shops are taking over.”* (Caribbean female housing association tenant, age 50-59, Moorlands Estate).

Residents expressed concerns about what would happen to local infrastructure. There were concerns about the P5 bus, a key transport links for people who are less mobile. There were concerns that it will be relocated, because of construction at Loughborough Park and Somerleyton Road. Others feared that when the redevelopment has been constructed the bus will be more crowded.

There was a concern about increased density of residents and what this would mean for the area as a place to live. Some reported concerns about how new and old residents will interact and mix. One resident explained, *“don’t know how many youngsters will come and what this will mean or how youngsters is going to take it. If it is good and people will maintain the peace it will be beneficial”* (Black British housing association tenant, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate). Others commented that they did not think it would be an issue, *“in this area we accept whoever is coming as long as they are not racist or doing any bad things”* (Black British female housing association tenant, age 60-69, Moorlands Estate).

Lack of facilities for young people in the area were also mentioned and there were a concern for young people’s wellbeing and opportunities. The new development is seen as a way to create constructive facilities for young people. Residents commented *“troubled kids have nothing to do around here. If you have activities for them, they can keep themselves out of the street.”* (African female council tenant, age 18-29), *“it needs more activities, something safe and more activities for children”* (Asian private owner, age 40-49). Many of the younger residents expressed similar views: *“I would like a multitask school with dance/drama/ cooking etc.”* (White and Black Caribbean male resident, age 18-29, Coldharbour Lane), and *“if there would be a music studio I would be around here all the time.”* (Black British male resident, age 18-29)

Many were positive about a theatre as a facility to engage children and young people. Residents commented that, *“it will be nice for kids. I could take my granddaughter to do things.”* (Black British female housing association resident, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate),

**“I don’t want another gated area where we are cut out from [pointed towards the new development next to Brixton Village]. I want something accessible, affordable -- something the local community can use.”**

Black Caribbean female council tenant, age 30-39

*“it depends on what kind of theatre it is. Will the teenagers be able to go? Children? I want my kids to explore and experience different things.”* (African female council tenant, age 18-29) and *“It offers something for Brixton people. The theatre may entice young people to act and learn. I think it would benefit everyone, the whole of Brixton.”* (White British female housing association tenant, age 40-49, Moorlands Estate).

Similarly there was a positive feeling about getting more community facilities for existing and new residents to meet and socialise, one resident hoped for *“courses and opportunities to relate with residents,”* adding *“most of us are isolated from neighbours”* (African female resident, age 30-39, Moorlands Estate).

In our interviews with community organisations and agencies in the area there was a positive but sometimes hesitant attitude toward the development plans. Both agencies and residents often spoke of their hopes that the development would provide affordable housing and *“something”* for the existing community, supporting local facilities and services, like the school, nursery and most of the nearby traders.

*“Hope the housing and services would be for people who have lived in the area for a long time. People here have seen projects come and go.”* (Agencies)

Traders were less well informed about the Somerleyton Road development and their reactions often reflected their views about wider changes in Brixton. *“It may make the area nicer but it will drive the property price up and people will get pushed out”* (Trader, Coldharbour Lane). Some traders running shops and businesses on the Moorlands estate and Coldharbour Lane feared the new development would bring chain stores into the area *“I cannot compete with a Tesco”* (Trader, Corry Drive). Similarly on Atlantic Road and on Coldharbour Lane, traders were concerned that the development would cause them to lose customers *“Professionals are no use to us they only go to restaurants or bars. We need families with children like it used to be”* (Trader, Atlantic Road).

Some traders who were more recently arrived, or whose customers included more affluent residents, thought the development could increase trade. A few did not think it would impact on them, relying on their regular customers to maintain business.

**“I cannot compete  
with a Tesco”**

Trader, Corry Drive

## Trust

A strong theme emerging in many discussions was lack of trust, in the development plans and whether they would materialise, in the project partners good faith, and in the process that had been followed to gauge community views and to involve local people. Some suspicion flowed from factors specific to Somerleyton Road, but it was difficult to separate this out from the impact of the large number of initiatives in Brixton galvanising debate, from rent increases at the Railway Arches, to the eviction of tenants from the Loughborough Park estate.

This was reflected in the research process. Some key agencies were very unwilling to be involved in the research, not wishing to go “on the record” with their opinions even after being promised anonymity. Others did speak to researchers but needed persuasion.

The aspiration at the start of the project was to use an online platform - Commonplace - to gather responses online. This proved unpopular and with both residents and agencies, and did not appear to be trusted - and was therefore abandoned.

The project partners - in particular Lambeth Council and Brixton Green - were singled out for criticism. Lambeth’s overall strategy to growth in Brixton was often queried, particularly who it was intended to benefit, their commitment to supporting the local community, local businesses and traders, was also questioned. These attitudes were associated with other council initiatives, including their estate regeneration strategy, and Brixton developments like the Town Hall.

*“If it was for the community, I would be for it, but it’s not. Lambeth don’t do things for the community. Everything is for their own benefit”* (Caribbean female resident, age 60-69. Moorlands Estate)

*“Its a complicated controversial project. There are a lot of issues. The Council gloss on it is that its a radical progressive scheme by a Labour Council to “do things differently” as on Cllr said to me a while back. It’s a flagship project for the “Coop Council” working with different “partners” rather than doing it top down. Well that’s how they see it. Ending up with a community run development. Apparently.”*(Online forum)

*“I don’t think residents have been involved. It is all business. It is not long term and sustainable. Brixton Green says they represent community but to be able to say that they need to represent 10 % and they do not“* (Female private owner).

The proliferation of agencies and the partnership working arrangements have caused confusion: *“So there’s Lambeth. And then there’s Brixton Green. And Igloo. And Streets Concept. And Green Man. And No 6. And Brixton Come Together. And Future Brixton. And the architects. And stakeholders. And Social Life (are they still around?). Have I missed anyone?”* (online forum)

The polarisation of views has made it very difficult for many to trust the plans they have seen for Somerleyton Road and to acknowledge the role of different agencies in developing these.

**“I don’t think residents have been involved. It is all business. It is not long term and sustainable. Brixton Green says they represent community but to be able to say that they need to represent 10 % and they do not”**

Female private owner



Many of the sceptics were not against the idea of building new housing, but did not believe it would be affordable and feared further displacement of existing residents and shops. Part of the scepticism was directed towards the development partners' ability to represent and create something for the existing community.

The former residents of Carlton Mansions Housing Coop were evicted from their homes in late 2014. The Coop had lived in the distinctive Victorian housing for over 30 years and their removal has tainted the development in the eyes of its members and supporters. Coop members were approached to take part in this research and chose to participate through an online forum.

*"We got our community broken up. The Council would rather work with the kind of people who run Brixton Green. I really resent it. I would not mind so much if it was just the Council doing the whole project."* (Online forum)

Brixton Green has drawn criticism from some parts of the Brixton community for several years. The layers of suspicion and mistrust between some community agencies and Brixton Green escalated in 2015 while this research was being carried out, as Number Six Somerleyton Road, the temporary community centre, managed initially by Brixton Green, hit high controversy. This was reflected in some interviews with residents and local groups, who stated they were unsure who Brixton Green are.

However agencies and groups at the Moorlands Estate and Southwyck House said they had been engaged and informed by Brixton Green, mainly by one member of the organisation: *"talked to [Brixton Green representative] ages ago and kept an eye on it"* (Agency), *"[Brixton Green representative] came in and spoke to the group last year"* (Community group). *"Know [Brixton Green representative], he keeps sending me emails about the project"*.

Many expressed that they were happy that something was happening at Somerleyton Road and were especially positive about more affordable homes being built and the council being behind the plans.

*"If they are building affordable rent housing in Somerleyton, then that's a good thing."* (White British male, age 40-49, Atlantic Road)

*"If it is HA or council this will bring normal people which will benefit our business."* (Trader, Atlantic Road)

*"Development project is good if council is in control"* (resident at Moorlands Estate)

*"Somerleyton development a possibility to make fresh start. It is a symbolic sign to say we prioritise community."* (agency)

**"If they are building affordable rent housing in Somerleyton, then that's a good thing."**

White British male, age 40-49, Atlantic Road

## **5. Conclusion**

# Conclusion

This research has reveals the complexities of living in a local area going through profound, and for some, unsettling change, and how this affects feelings and perceptions of an ambitious new development.

It shows that although many in the area know about the scheme, many do not; that agencies on the whole have been better informed and are more supportive than residents; that residents appreciate the lower crime and improved reputation that has resulted from changes in the last decade, but are more fearful of the impact of current trends.

The Somerleyton Road development intends to deliver an ambitious vision: the Future Brixton website describes the scheme: *“the local community and the council are coming together to build a street for all ages which will be run by the people who use it. A place where the community and businesses can thrive in the centre of Brixton.”*

When the new homes are completed this research will be repeated. We will see how stakeholders and residents feel about the development, whether their confidence has increased in what it can contribute and whether it has allayed some fears of change. We will also explore how new residents are feeling about their area, and compare this with the views of a sample of residents drawn from the same 200m radius of the scheme. We will repeat the less formalised street interviews with residents and traders, and revisit agencies, to find out to what impact the scheme has had, and whether it has met expectations and allayed fears.

## **6. Appendix**