

# Lowerwood Court garages transformation: survey results

Report written January 2023

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
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AND CHELSEA

## Introduction

### About the consultation

The purpose of this survey was to build a baseline of community views over the potential transformation of Lowerwood Court garages at Convent Estate, North Kensington, into workspaces. Although there have been proposals to redevelop the garages in the past, the Council is now taking a fresh look at the site. The Council's Planning, Property and Social Investment, and Housing services are involved in this project.

The results of the survey are informing discussions on how to deliver the project, including the best operational model. Any decision will take into account the wellbeing of residents and the wider local community.

### Consultation Methodology

The survey ran for six weeks, launching on 31 October 2022 and closing on 11 December 2022.

The questionnaire was based on initial conversations with residents and Ward Councillors in early October 2022. The residents' association reviewed the survey ahead of its publication and signed it off.

There were 16 responses to the survey. Therefore, findings and particularly percentage figures from this document should be used with caution due to the number of responses.

### Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank everyone that took the time to support the drafting of the survey and who fed back their views.

## At a glance

- The majority of respondents (almost 70%) live in Lowerwood Court. We also received responses from Clare Gardens residents, within Convent Estate, and a nearby street.
- Responses suggest that concerns raised by residents at the start of the engagement process may be appropriately addressed by the solutions listed in this survey – see question 2.
- There is more controversy over what should be prioritised for the benefit of residents and the wider local community.
- The least contentious priorities are *discounted* workspace for residents and *training* opportunities for the local community.
- The most controversial proposal is a new *rooftop garden*. Respondents say it should be designed carefully and with strong resident participation, if built at all, as it is in view of the flats and in close proximity to residences.
- Funding the residents' association (RA) using *revenue* generated by the project is the second most contentious idea. Some residents suggest any funding should be available for different groups and initiatives, not only at the discretion of the RA.
- Although providing a new *community space* within the garages is well supported, it may not be a top priority as there is already a community room in the estate. Instead, residents suggest renovating the existing community room.
- New *storage* for residents is supported provided there are safety measures to avoid fire hazard and other risks.
- Residents want reassurance that the project will not affect the structure of the building or increase pressure on *drainage and sewage* systems, which they say is troubled by recurring floods.
- *Anti-social behaviour* is a controversial issue as some residents do not see this as a priority. Nevertheless, access to the estate through the new workspaces has been raised as a potential concern. It was recommended that fire escape routes do not lead to the residential area.
- Respondents suggest that the *use* of each unit should be strictly controlled. Activities that require intense usage of delivery drivers, such as dark kitchens, should not be allowed.
- A balanced approach to *opening hours* should be achieved, making sure the area is kept quiet in the evenings. Longer hours may be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and level of noise produced by the workspace.

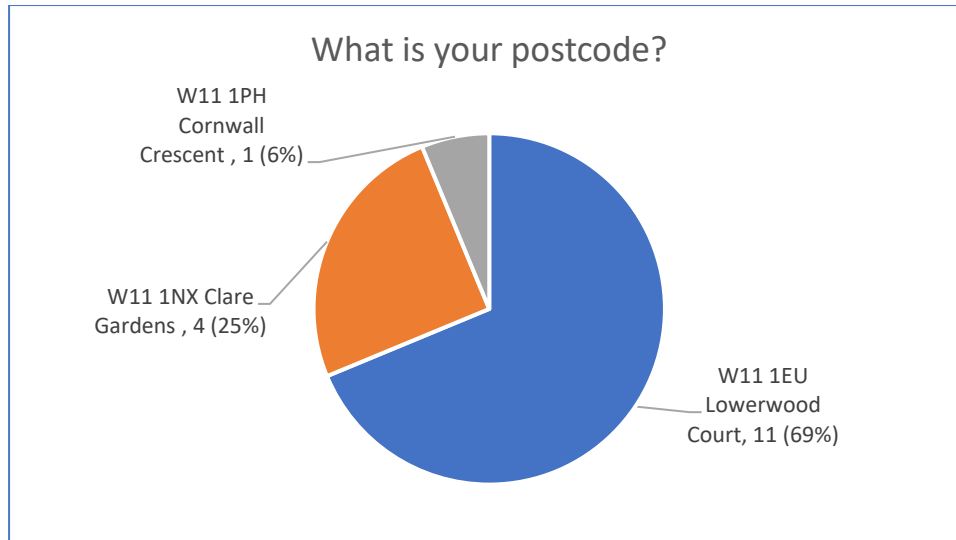
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## Questionnaire analysis

### Q1: What is your postcode?

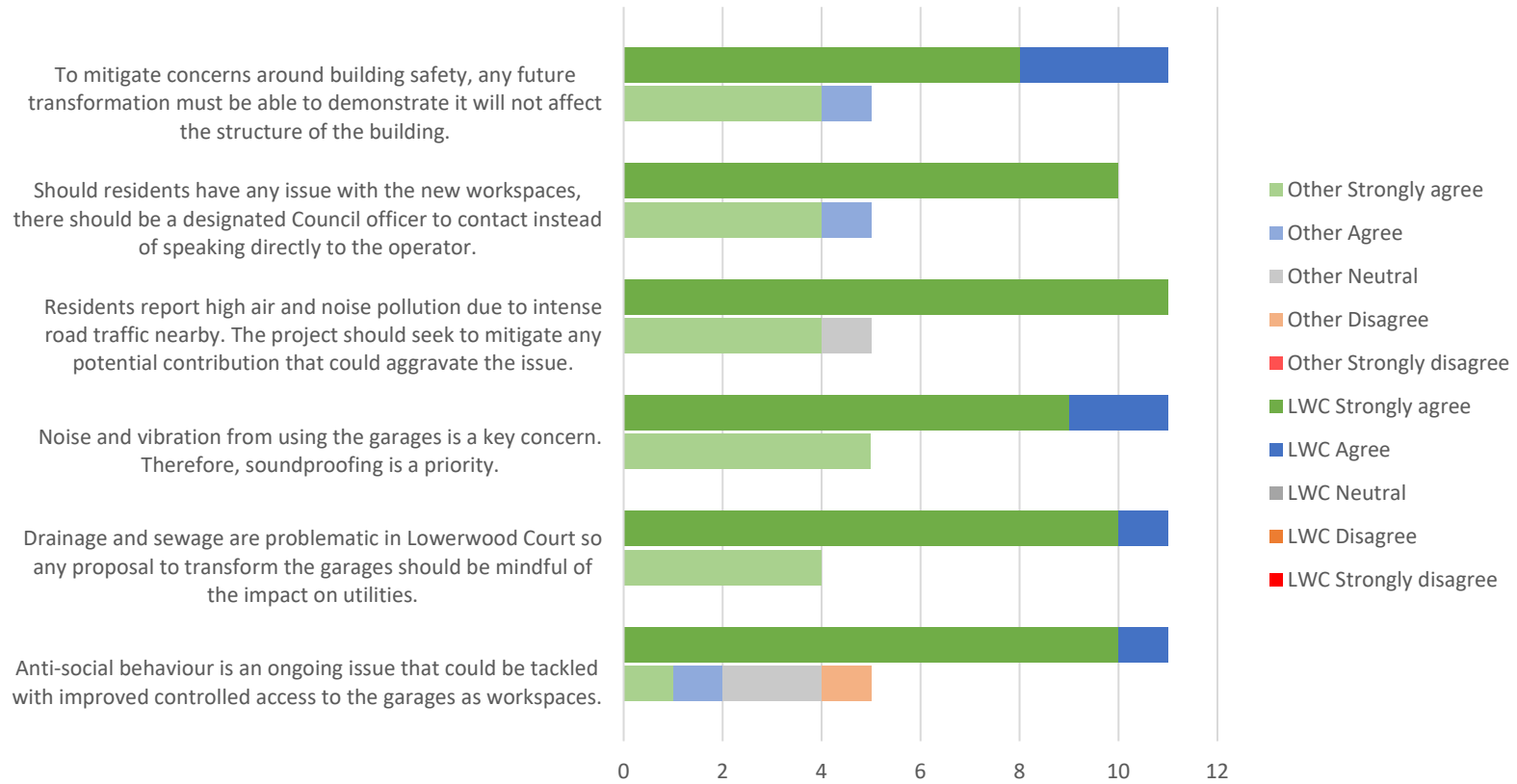
- Almost 70% of respondents are Lowerwood Court residents
- Almost 95% of respondents are Covent Estate residents, which includes Lowerwood Court and Clare Gardens
- The 11 surveys returned from Lowerwood Court residents represent 17% of the 64 flats in the block



Q2: To what extent do you agree with the following solutions to address concerns over new workspaces in the garages?  
Responses to this question are split between Lowerwood Court (LWC) residents and otherwise.

- Over 90% of Lowerwood Court respondents agree or strongly agree with the statements
- Regarding other residents in the area, 80% agree with most statements except with the affirmation that anti-social behaviour is an ongoing issue. This is because some do not see tackling anti-social behaviour as a priority.

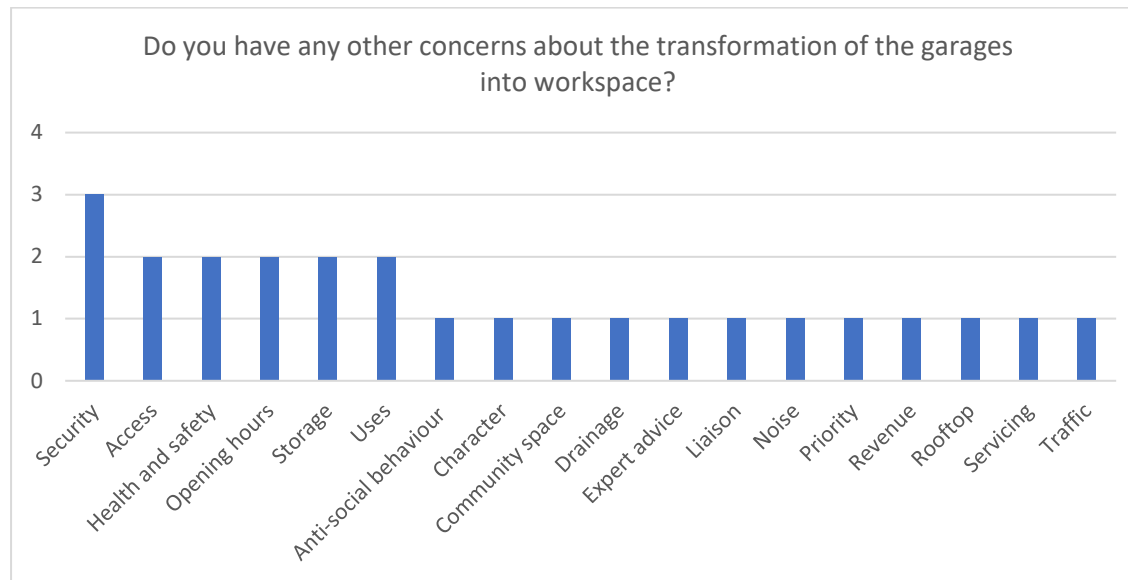
To what extent do you agree with the following solutions to address concerns over new workspaces in the garages?



### Q3: Do you have any other concerns about the transformation of the garages into workspace?

Respondents were offered the opportunity to comment on the transformation project and to suggest additional concerns.

Comments made have been themed and are summarised in the chart below. Examples of comments made can be seen further down. We received 13 responses to this question in total. However, comments can appear in multiple themes.



- The *security* of the premises and its residents is the most mentioned theme, receiving three comments. Respondents fear the security of residents could be impacted as a result of the potential increase in footfall. They suggest security measures such as better lighting and CCTV may help to mitigate the issue.
- Five themes came second on the list, each receiving two mentions.
- *Access* refers to controlled access to the estate through the new workspaces. It was suggested that fire escape routes should not lead to the residential area. This topic also refers to the different views over anti-social behaviour as some respondents see access of non-residents as a key driver of disturbance. The whole estate has been gated recently.
- Respondents have expressed concerns about the *health and safety* in the building once the workspaces are in use, demanding regular inspections by an independent body.

- Respondents would also like to see a balanced approach to *opening hours*, making sure the area is kept quiet in the evenings. Longer hours may be considered depending on the nature and amount of noise produced by an individual workspace.
- New *storage* spaces are supported provided there are safety measures in place to avoid fire hazards and other risks.
- Respondents suggest that the *use* of each unit should be strictly controlled during and when renewing tenancies. Uses that require intense use of delivery drivers, such as dark kitchens, should not be allowed.

### Q3 Quotes

“Top priority is to take into account the wellbeing of children and those who care for them.”

“Health and Safety Regulations will apply and be inspected regularly and monitored according to legislation not only to the total space being occupied but also the individual units. These H&S inspections should be carried out by an authority independent of RBKC and provide copies of their reporting to RBKC at times mutually agreed in advance.”

“Increased footfall could impact on the safety, security and integrity of the estate.”

“This isn’t mentioned but traffic on Westbourne Park Road is often completely halted right in front of Lowerwood Court garages with BUS drivers needing to exit buses and direct other vehicles to clear the way. Any businesses will likely have deliveries and collections standing idle in this area. Added traffic and “delivery” parking is going to be a significant problem.”

“It should not be a kitchen hub for delivery services. There are already too many L Reg scooters zooming around ignoring safety.”

“Whoever wins the bid has to ensure that some of the revenue goes back into the council properties and estate especially for the young people and the elderly.”

“In order to solve the problem of flooding and not fit for purpose drainage there needs to be a substantial amount of investigative work to find out what the source of the problem is. The cause must be identified and resolved in a viable way.”

“The Council should monitor the use of the garages as workspaces irrespective of the operator and inform residents accurately. Each and every resident should have the opportunity to respond, and their considerations taken seriously. The Council should facilitate this dialogue as long as there is genuine concern about people.”

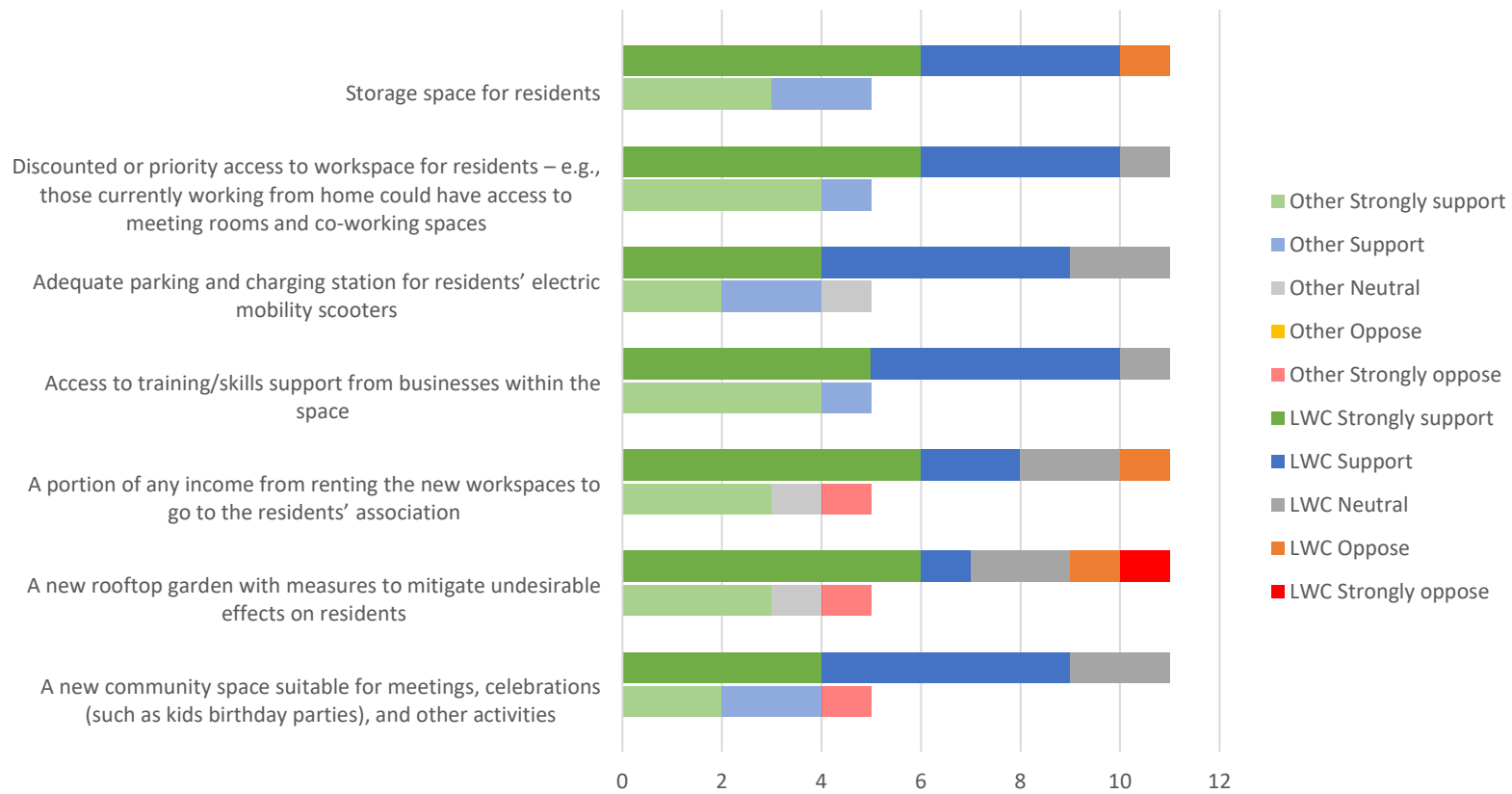


Q4: To what extent do you support the following priorities to ensure that the transformation of the garages benefits residents and the wider local community?

*Responses to this question are split between Lowerwood Court (LWC) residents and otherwise.*

- The least contentious priorities are *discounted/priority access* to workspace for residents and *training/skills* opportunities for the local community. Each received 90% support among Lowerwood Court residents and 80% from other residents.
- The opportunity to provide adequate parking for mobility scooters, tackling a current issue, is also well supported although with a higher level of neutrality than the top two priorities. Therefore, this may not be a pressing need.
- Creating a new rooftop garden is the most contentious topic as some think it may be a disturbance to nearby flats. It is the only statement opposed and strongly opposed by 20% of Lowerwood Court residents. Nevertheless, about 60% support or strongly support the garden, and almost 20% are neutral.
- Funding the residents' association (RA) using revenue generated by the project is the second most contentious idea after the rooftop garden. Some residents suggest that funding should not be used at the exclusive discretion of the RA.
- Although providing a new community space within the garages is well supported, it may not be a top priority as there is already a community room in the estate. Instead, residents suggest renovating the existing community room.
- New storage space is a popular idea. However, there are safety concerns and hazardous materials should not be allowed.

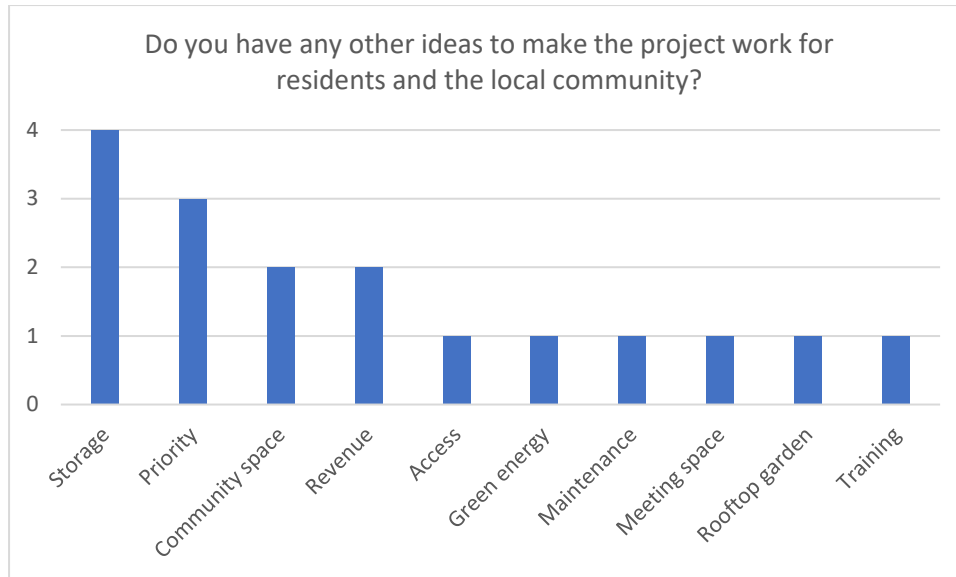
To what extent do you support the following priorities to ensure that the transformation of the garages benefits residents and the wider local community?



#### Q5: Do you have any other ideas to make the project work for residents and the local community?

Respondents were offered the opportunity to comment on the transformation project and to suggest additional priorities. Comments made have been themed and are summarised in the chart below. Examples of comments made can be seen further down. We received eight responses to this question in total. However, comments can appear in multiple themes.

- *Storage* is the most commented on theme and highly supported by some consultees. One comment envisions a self-storage service taking up most of the garages, offering low rates and open to people living nearby. However, some Lowerwood Court residents worry lock-up storage could pose a fire hazard. They suggest stored goods should be strictly controlled.
- Regarding *priority*, respondents suggest residents and members of the local community should be offered discounted rates or spaces for free. This would support income generation while hampering current conflicts between neighbours who work from home using noise equipment. Consultees also see an opportunity to support local start-ups by offering pop-up spaces.
- *Community space* was the third most mentioned theme alongside *revenue*. Some residents see the transformation project as an opportunity to renovate the existing community room. Others suggest a new community space for hire would be beneficial. Regarding ways to make use of any potential share of *revenue*, two comments suggest that it should be made available to various residents' groups and initiatives instead of handing all funding to the residents' association.
- On green energy, there was a mention to solar panels.
- On training, it was suggested that opportunities should support young people to find a vocation and explore skills.
- A new *meeting space* or cafe is one type of shared workspace highlighted by a consultee.
- On *access*, there was one call for a 24-hour concierge controlling access to the workspaces.
- One comment suggests there could be a new *maintenance hub* with handyman, plumbers.
- The rooftop garden idea was supported in one comment. It encouraged the Council to reach out to designers involved in a recent greening project within the estate.



#### Q5 Quotes

“Providing discounted workspace for residents may help to support vocational needs and hamper conflicts between neighbours. At the moment some work from home using noisy work equipment, disturbing neighbours.”

“A safe & secure small self-storage area charging rent is help and has a low impact on residents and generates income. Many residents would use for bicycles, car seats. Could be also rented by people on surrounding streets. Not for commercial renting.”

“Any storage space in the garages should explore ways to minimise risks or storing hazardous material. Prioritise workspace. People over objects/groups.”

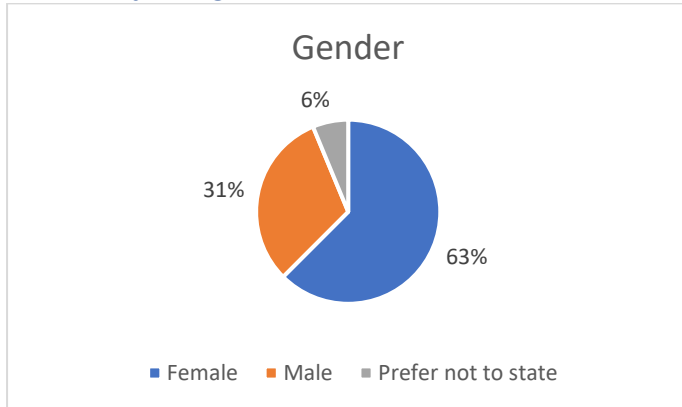
“Refurbish the existing community space in Lowerwood Court. Two floors space currently disused.”

“A place for Estate residents to rent for events and they must pay for staff managing & cleaning. Tables chairs rented as well.”

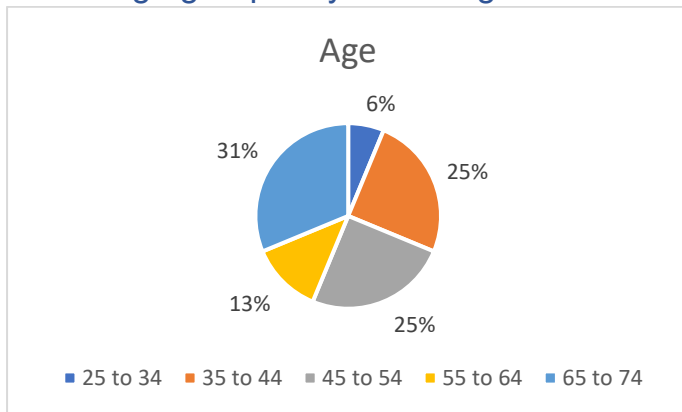
“The residents' association does not necessarily represent the views and needs of all residents. Profit from the workspaces may also support other local groups or specific residents' projects not necessarily proposed by the residents' association. There should be a fair, just, nonbiased committee to decide the use of the funds.”

## Demographic

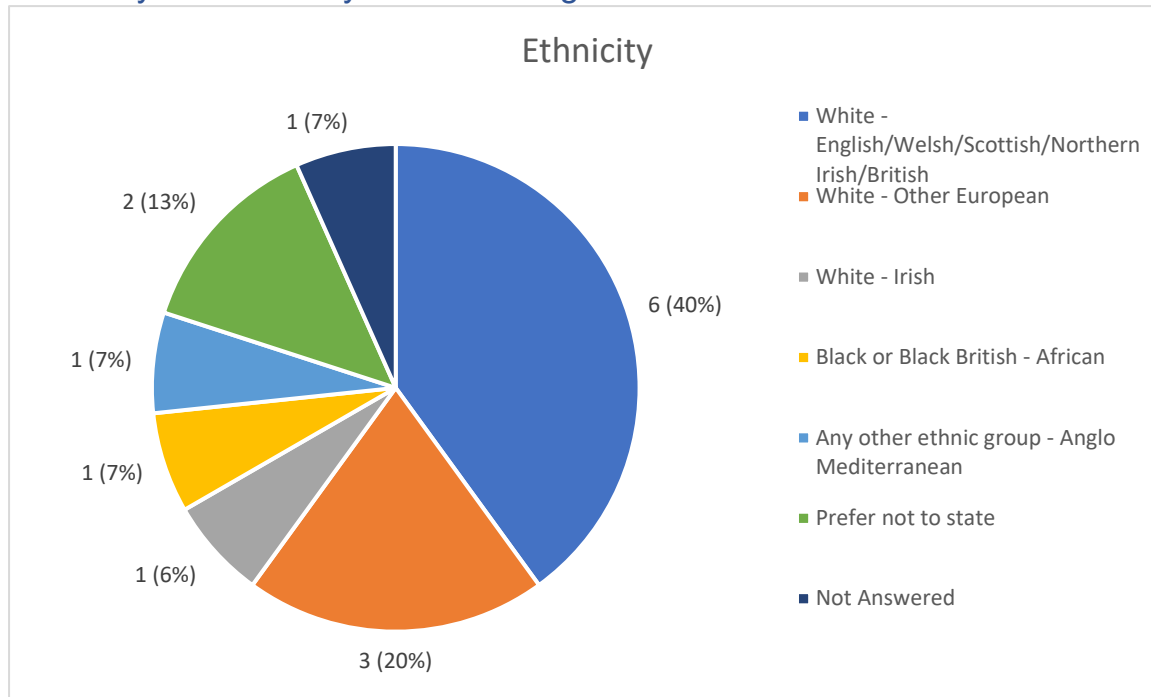
What is your gender?



Which age group do you belong to?



## How do you describe your ethnic origin?



Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

