

New Homes Delivery Programme Silchester Arches

Analysis of Phase Two stakeholder consultation

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KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA**

Introduction

Background

The Council is delivering 600 new homes including a minimum of 300 social rent homes, alongside open market homes to rent and other community and employment facilities as part of its New Homes Programme. All of these new homes will be developed on sites owned by the Council. We have also committed to building all the new homes without the loss of any existing homes.

The New Homes Delivery Programme (NHDP) has identified a site by Silchester Road as a potential area to help deliver new homes for the borough. This site, currently called Silchester Arches will form part of Stage Two of the NHDP.

Consultation methodology

Following a first phase of consultation between November 2020 and January 2021, the Council launched a second phase of consultation on 18 March, running to 29 April 2021, to gather stakeholders' views on the emerging proposals. A dedicated page was set up on the Council's website with details of the proposals and consultation, this included presentation material and a video presentation. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback via an online survey and two virtual live chat sessions were organised for stakeholders to ask questions about the proposals and provide feedback. To ensure those without access to the internet were able to participate, paper copies of material was available on request, as was support in alternative formats (e.g. support for those whose first language is not English).

The consultation was promoted via a variety of channels, including; leaflet drops, social media, the Council's website, newsletters, posters and via local voluntary and community groups.

Report

A total of 51 surveys were returned by the deadline and a total of 31 stakeholders attended across the two live chat sessions. This report contains an analysis of survey responses and a summary of feedback from the live chat sessions. In addition a local Ward Councillor provided detailed feedback on the scheme. Where graphs are shown, actual numbers are used as percentages can be misleading with a lower number of responses. A separate appendix report is also available, containing data tables, all comments made by respondents to the survey and the full response from the Ward Councillor.

Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank all residents and stakeholders that took the time to feedback their views.



Results at a glance: Feedback from the survey

Principle of the scheme:

- A total of 19 respondents '**strongly supported**' or '**supported**' the principle of the scheme.
- However, slightly more (24) '**strongly objected**' or '**objected**' and seven responded neutrally.
- Those that objected were asked to explain why. The most commented on themes were in relation to **impact on light of surrounding residents** (nine comments) and **height of the development** (eight comments).

Site layout:

- A total of 16 respondents '**strongly supported**' or '**supported**' the proposed site layout.
- However, more (22) '**strongly objected**' or '**objected**' and 12 responded neutrally.
- Those that objected were asked to explain why. The most commented on themes were in relation to the **height of the building** (ten comments) and **concerns about impact on ACAVA land/activities** (five comments).

Height of the proposed building:

- Over half (26) indicated that '**five storeys**' was their preference.
- Comments made by respondents in relation to the height of the building focused on the building being **five storeys or less/all to high** (17 comments).

Building in the North of the borough:

- Attendees at the virtual meetings questioned why the Council is focusing building developments in the North of the borough.

Comments on the emerging scheme:

- Respondents were asked if they had comments or thoughts on the emerging scheme. The most commented on themes were in relation to the **design of the development** (seven comments). A number of respondents also raised concerns about the **ACAVA land and site access**.

Existing tree:

- The majority (38) indicated that they '**strongly supported**' or '**supported**' the retention of the tree.



Results at a glance: Feedback from virtual meetings

Social housing:

- Attendees were clear in their support for the principle of new social housing but not if the level proposed would negatively impact their existing amenity.
- Attendees also wanted to understand if any new homes would be retained by the Council and whether they would be subject to a local lettings policy.

Use of the site:

- Attendees did not feel they had been asked about what they would like to see on site. Some would like to see a garden instead and others indicated that they thought the site should be part of Bramley House.

Repairing/refurbishing towers:

- Some attendees questioned why the application is proceeding before repairing/refurbishing towers takes place.

Plans/drawings:

- Some attendees felt that the visualisations of the scheme were not an accurate representation of the area.

Height of the building:

- Attendees expressed concern over the development being above five storeys and if it was taller the impacts on surrounding properties in terms of daylight, sunlight and privacy. Attendees also explained that building a 9 storey building on the site would result in the “triggering” of difficult emotions about the Grenfell Tower Fire.

ACAVA land:

- Attendees would like to see further discussions about the use of ACAA land. However, it was noted that tenants of ACAA would be concerned about potential mixing of the existing yard space with other uses as this is where they currently work.

Other issues that may be caused by the development:

- Some attendees felt that parking is a major issue in the area and the new development would make this worse.
- Some attendees were concerned about the noise from new residents.



Section 1:

Stakeholder survey



Survey findings: Objections to the height of the building

Respondents that objected to the height of the building were asked to explain why this was. Comments made have been themed and the themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments made can be seen overleaf, with the full list of themes and comments made can be found in appendix two.

The most commented on theme was in relation to the building being **five storeys or less/all too high** (17 comments).

Theme*	Comments
Should be five storeys or less/all too high	17
Density/constraints of site	5
Impact on light	5
Building such a development close to Grenfell	3
Concerns about fire safety	3
Garden space	3
Design suggestions/comments	2

**Themes shown with two or more mentions*



Survey findings: Objections to the height of the building

“No higher than 3 stories or it will swamp the 6 houses attached to it.”

Should be five storeys or less/all too high

“The height is way too much for this site 3 or 4 storeys would be better.”

Should be five storeys or less/all too high

“Building of this height entirely inappropriate next to railway line and dense residential buildings. Blocks daylight and sunshine in an already tightly packed community with no garden space.”

Should be five storeys or less/all too high

“The site is tiny and the development should reflect this. The area has such high density housing already. I think you should look for a more suitable site. This is an area where people have been shown so little respect. Why are you continuing to be so disrespectful?”

Density/constraints of site



“Anything higher will block direct sunshine onto our gardens - Wesley Square.”

Impact on light

“To build something this high, this close to Grenfell Tower to TOTALLY insensitive.”

Building such a development close to Grenfell

“I am concerned if building more than 5 storeys population density would be too high and finally concern re max height as only single stair building with limited fire service access.”

Concerns about fire safety



Survey findings: Comments on height of the building

Respondents were encouraged to make further comments on the height of the building. Comments made have been themed and the themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments made can be seen overleaf, with the full list of themes and comments made can be found in appendix two.

The most commented on theme was in relation to the building being **five storeys or less/all too high** (13 comments).

Theme*	Comments
Should be five storeys or less/all too high	13
Impact on light levels	8
Density/site constraints	6
Visual impact/blending in with other properties	4
Building such a development close to Grenfell	3
Fire safety concerns	2

**Themes shown with two or more mentions*



Survey findings: Comments on height of the building

“Anything above five stories is too high.”

Should be five storeys or less/all too high

“Our privacy will be compromised. Blocking sun light. Proposed height not acceptable for Bramley House as it is double the size of block.”

Should be five storeys or less/all too high

“I am also concerned if building more than 5 storeys population density would be too high...”

Density/site constraints

“The higher options appear to be an over development of the site, particularly considering the modest amount of outside garden/play space being proposed.”

Density/site constraints



“This may also block light to adjacent low rise houses next to it and potentially as far Wesley Square.”

Impact on light levels

“Five storeys, 6 at most would be acceptable. Anything more is too much for a small site and not in keeping with a large part of the surrounding housing.”

Visual impact/blending in with other properties

“We should not build any more high rise after Grenfell.”

Building such a development close to Grenfell



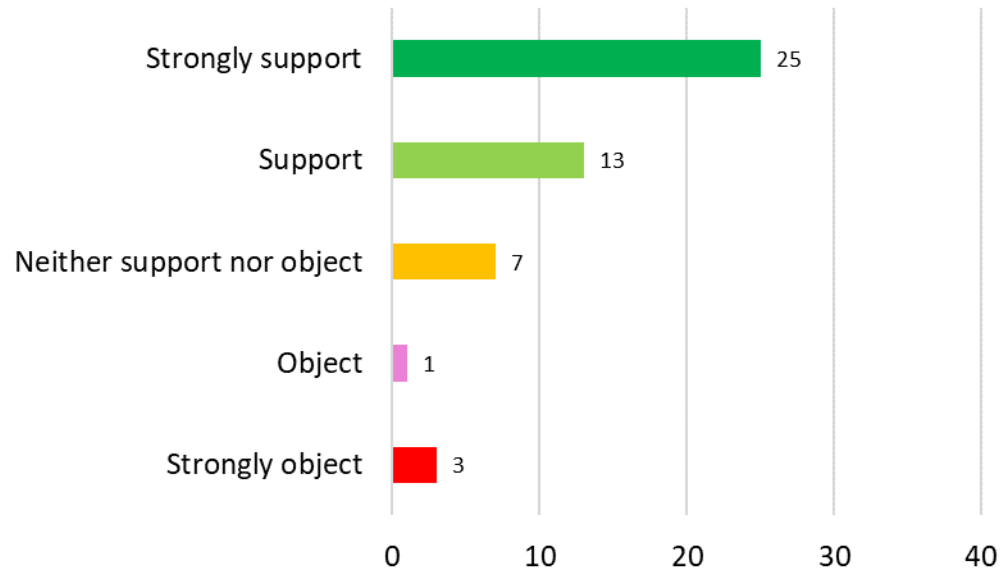
Survey findings: Existing tree

Respondents were asked if they supported the retention of the existing tree at the front of the site.

- The majority (38) indicated that they **'strongly supported'** or **'supported'** the retention of the tree.
- However, four **'strongly objected'** or **'objected'** to the tree's retention and seven responded neutrally.

Those that objected to the proposed retention of the tree were asked to comment on why this was. Themes, and examples of comments, can be seen on the following pages.

Do you support the retention of the existing tree at the front of the site?



Base: All responses (51)



Survey findings: Objections to retention of the tree

Respondents that objected to the retention of the tree were asked to explain why this was. The majority of comments made (six) were in relation to the **importance of keeping the tree/greenery**, one respondent indicated that the tree could be removed. Examples of comments made can be seen below, with the full list of themes and comments made can be found in appendix two.

“This tree invaluable to local community. Far too many trees have been cut down and severely cut back in an area which is in great need of the benefits of trees and wildlife and birds. This is a densely populated urban area.”

Importance of keeping the tree/greenery

“Greenery is significant for cleaner air, beauty, and good mental health. Greenery has been proved in hospital recoveries to promote wellbeing in patients and faster recovery times form surgery, which shows the significance of greenery to human health and wellbeing.”

Importance of keeping the tree/greenery



“More trees please! That’s what we need.”

More trees requested

“Couldn’t care. It’s a tree not a home.”

Not concerned about the tree



Survey findings: Comments on the emerging scheme

Respondents were asked if they had any other thoughts on the emerging scheme. Comments made have been themed and the themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments made can be seen overleaf, with the full list of themes and comments made can be found in appendix two.

The most commented on theme was in relation to the **design of the development** (seven comments).

Theme*	Comments
Design of development	7
Density/constraints of site	5
Impact on light	5
ACAVA site/access to the site	4
Integration with existing buildings/streetscape	3
Building a high rise near Grenfell	2
Fire safety concerns	2
Not enough outside space	2
Prefer green space/garden instead	2
Repair/remedial work on housing estates first	2
Support for social housing homes	2

*Themes shown with two or more mentions



Survey findings: Comments on the emerging scheme

“I would have preferred more street facing windows on the ground floor. This section of the street is not particularly well overlooked in terms of residential windows and I sometimes feel nervous when walking alone along it at night.”

Design of the development

“I am not sure why you are basing the colour of the brick on the railway arch, which is pretty grim. A development at the top of Ladbroke Grove near Sainsbury's has been done in a dark brick, and it is depressing and characterless. Why can't you do it in something lighter, and maybe incorporate timber to soften the facade? This is not an attractive area and needs money spent on it, not more cheap housing thrown up.”

Design of the development

“The security of ACAVA's site is paramount. Artists use the outside area in ACAVA to make work, mixing resins, welding and using it as a crucial space to make work an outdoor workshop. There should be no access to the ACAVA site from anyone other than the artists. Why have the artists not been consulted during this process?”

ACAVA site/access to the site

“Silchester RA supports the building of new social homes. The proposed scheme looks to us like dumping. This is a small infill site and any large building would be disproportionate.”

Density/constraints of the site



“I would like to see how the shadow of the proposed new building and its varying heights will affect the light of the buildings around them.”

Impact on light

“Bad integration into existing streetscape.”

Integration with existing buildings/streetscape



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Survey findings: Comments on the presentation or site

Respondents were asked if they had any other thoughts on the presentation on site more generally. Comments made have been themed and the themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments made can be seen overleaf, with the full list of themes and comments made can be found in appendix two.

The most commented on theme was in relation to ***height of the building/lower height preferred*** (five comments).

Theme*	Comments
Height of the building/lower height preferred	5
Density/constraints of site	4
ACAVA land	3
Design of development	3
Fire safety/safety	2
In favour of development/design	2

**Themes shown with two or more mentions*



Survey findings: Comments on the emerging scheme

“My concerns mainly focus around building height and lack of physical space inside the flats, as discussed.”

Height of the building/lower height preferred

“Architect might think 9 floors is suitable, but not for people that will be living here.”

Height of the building/lower height preferred

“It’s too small and badly appointed. I strongly object to public access to ACAVA grounds as previously stated. Why are you trying to squeeze everything into an area that already has such high density housing.”

ACAVA land

“Please try to consider existing residents, young and old, and their welfare. There is not enough room or infrastructure for more people, cars and pollution without serious damage to residents' health and mental wellbeing.”

Density/constraints of site

“I don't think I'm alone in finding the architects/artists impressions of the future, completed blocks deceptive. I fear they give a glamorised view of the development and, particularly for the options above 5 storeys, disguise the considerable negative impact on the local streetscape.”

Design of development

“This the perfect site for a building of this height and proportions. It looks great.”

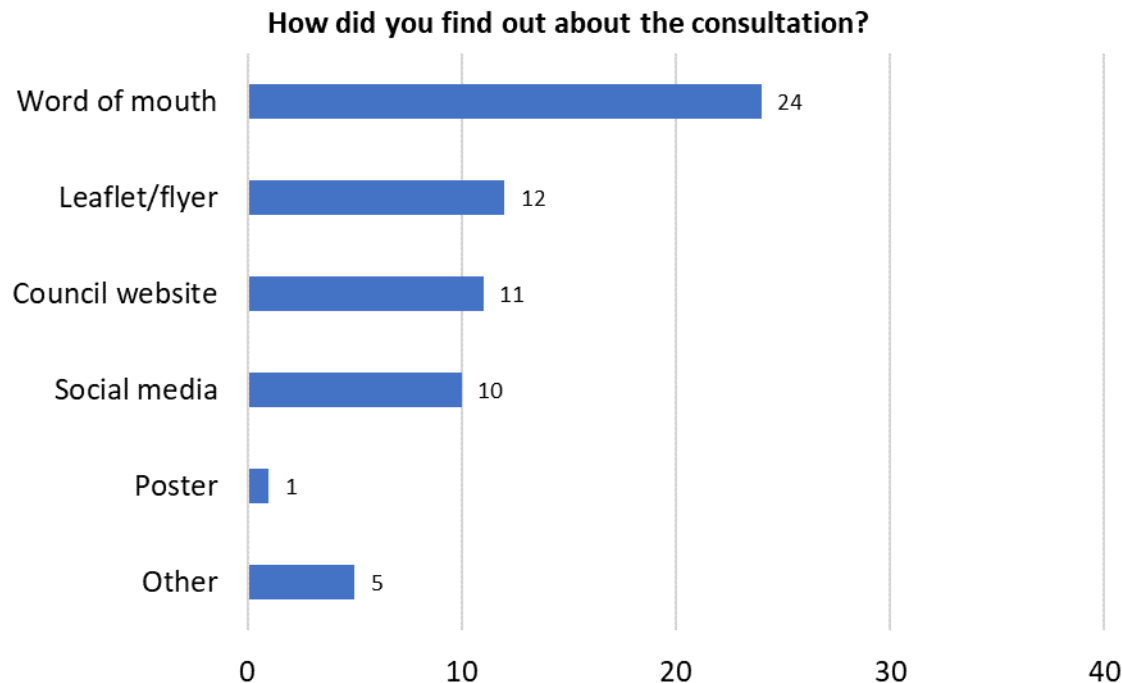
In favour of development/design



Survey findings: Finding out about the consultation

Respondents were asked how they found out about the consultation, respondents were able to select more than one answer to the question.

- More respondents (24) found out about the consultation by '**word of mouth**' than by any other means.
- Twelve respondents found out about the consultation by a '**leaflet/flyer**' and 11 via the '**Council website**'.
- Ten found out about the consultation by '**social media**'.
- Five respondents found out about the consultation by '**other means**'. All comments can be seen in appendix two, examples included: **Via ACAVA members** and **found out by accident/chance**.



Base: All responses (51)

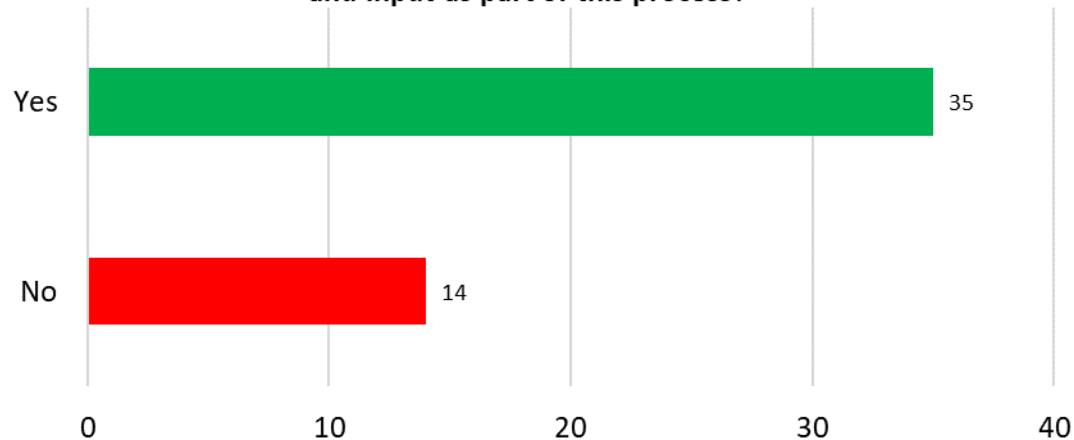


Survey findings: Presentation

Respondents were asked if they felt the presentation informed them how they could provide their thoughts as part of the process.

- The majority (35) of respondents felt the presentation did inform them how they could provide their thoughts and input as part of the process.
- However, 14 did not agree.

Do you feel that the presentation informed you how you can provide your thoughts and input as part of this process?

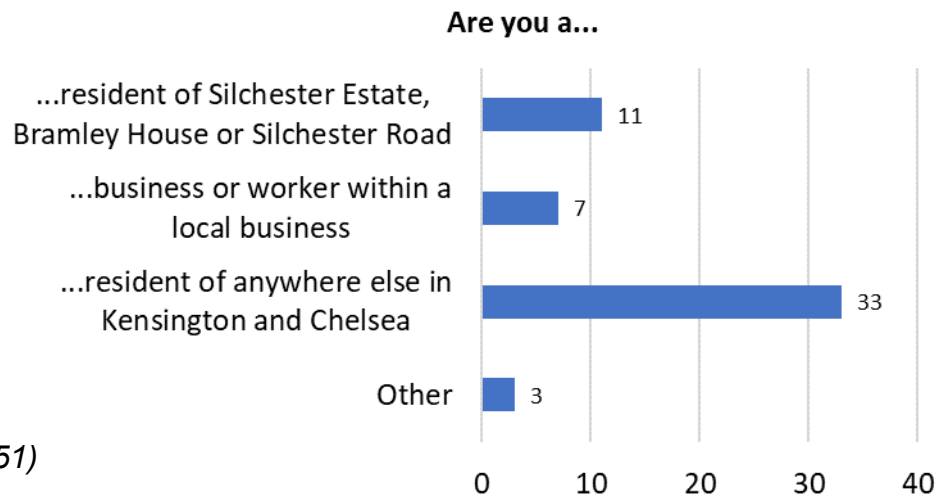


Base: All responses (51)

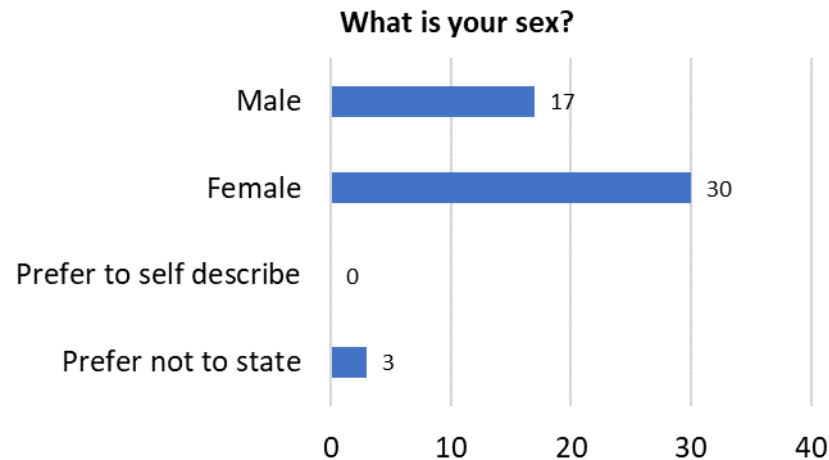


Survey findings: Profile of respondents

Respondents were asked a series of questions about themselves, to understand who had responded to the consultation.



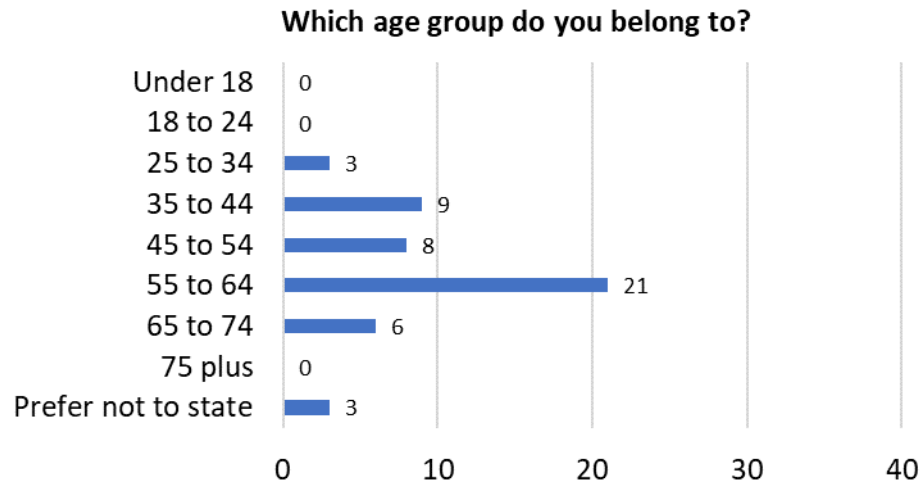
Base: All responses (51)



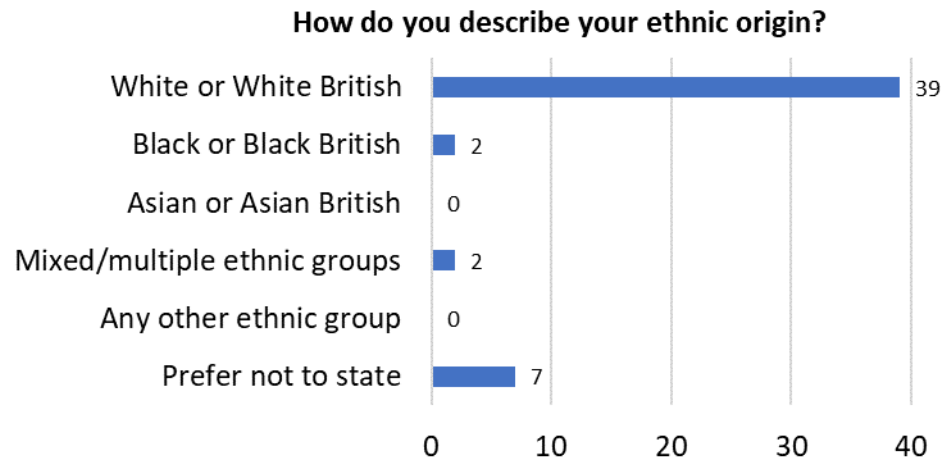
Base: All responses (51)



Survey findings: Profile of respondents



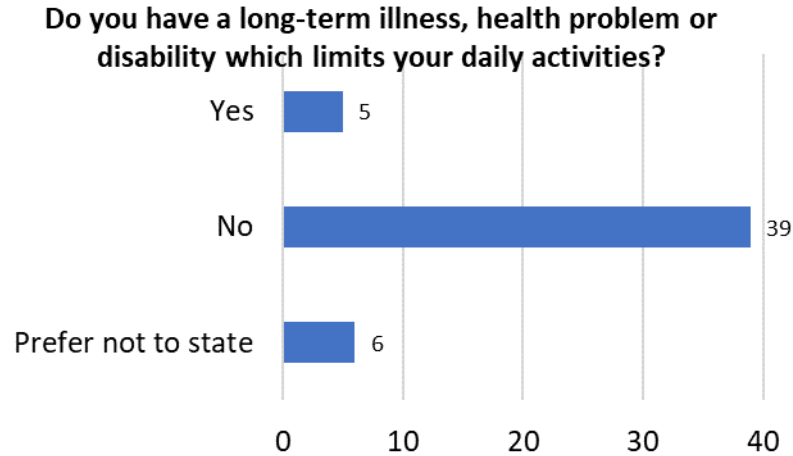
Base: All responses (51)



Base: All responses (51)



Survey findings: Profile of respondents



Base: All responses (51)



Section 2: Virtual meetings



Virtual meetings

In addition to the feedback survey, the Council organised two live chat sessions in order for residents and other interested stakeholders to ask questions and provide their feedback on the proposals. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, both sessions were held virtually via Zoom and attracted a total of 31 members of the public. The below table summarises the feedback from each of these sessions.

Date of meeting	Number of attendees	Summary of feedback/points made
25/3/21	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees did not feel they had been asked about what they would want on the site. Some would like to see a garden instead. Attendees questioned why the Council is only building in the North. Attendees pointed out that July 1990 permission should have turned site into car park for Bramley House residents. Attendees felt site is supposed to be part of Bramley House. Attendees questioned why the application is proceeding before repairing/refurbishing towers. Attendees felt the work to the towers is remedial work, not refurbishment. Queries raised about openable windows and privacy in relation to windows. Attendees felt that the visualisations of the scheme were not an accurate representation of the area. Attendees felt that nine storeys isn't proportional.
27/3/21	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees were clear in their support for the principle of new social housing but not if the level proposed would negatively impact their existing amenity. Attendees also wanted to understand if any new homes would be retained by the Council and whether they would be subject to a local lettings policy. Parking is a major issue in the area – new homes will only make this worse. More discussion is required regarding the use of the ACAVA space. However it was noted that tenants of ACAVA would be concerned about potential mixing of the existing yard space with other uses as this is where they currently work. Attendees asked why the Council is not building elsewhere in the borough. Attendees raised concerns regarding noise from new residents. Attendees expressed concern about building being above five storeys and if it was taller the impacts on surrounding properties in terms of daylight, sunlight and privacy. Attendees also explained that building a nine storey building on the site would result in the “triggering” of difficult emotions about the Grenfell Tower Fire.

Section 3: Feedback from Ward Councillor



Feedback from Ward Councillor

Notting Dale Ward Councillor Judith Blakeman submitted detailed feedback in relation to the proposals; her feedback can be seen below and on subsequent pages.

Having seen the emerging design proposals, do you support the principle of a scheme on the Silchester site providing new affordable homes?

I support the development of new **social rented** homes on this site. I do **not** support the development of new “affordable” homes, because every assurance we have been given at consultation meetings is that this site will be developed for **social rented** homes only. Changing the term to “affordable” will give any future member or officer of the Council the opportunity to change the rental status of these homes. The undertaking to build only social rented homes on this site **MUST** be honoured.

Furthermore, however many social housing units are provided, any Right to Buy provision must, if legal, include a clause that would prohibit Buy to Let.

The proposed site layout provides a new single residential block with garden space to the rear. Do you support this approach?

I support this option, but **only** depending on the height of the proposed new building. When the majority of tower blocks for social housing were built in the 1960s and 1970s, a significant degree of outdoor space was provided around each block. If this building is too high, there will be insufficient garden space for residents and the site will be over-developed.

There is a general concern that these proposals constitute over- development in a very small area. There is general support for the proposal, but **only** if the block is much lower than the Council’s preferred option of 9 storeys. This opposition to 9 storeys was allied to the greater feeling of enclosure such a disproportionate development would generate.

A number of residents also said that building another tower block so close would result in the “triggering” of difficult emotions about the Grenfell Tower Fire. They urged RBKC to be more sensitive to local people’s feelings and not to underestimate the ongoing psychological effects of the Grenfell Fire.



Feedback from Ward Councillor

Do you have any further comments on the site layout?

I object strongly to the view of the RBKC Planning Department that this site can accept a building up to 16 storeys in height. The Planning Department appears unable to learn from the Grenfell Fire, nor from housing complaints and neither has it yet developed a more inclusive culture. The proposal for 16 storeys seems to be based on the “build ‘em high and cram ‘em in” mentality towards social housing tenants, who are perceived as not deserving anything better.

In the 21st Century this is not an acceptable way to treat social housing residents. The Councillor Code of Conduct requires us to treat everyone with respect. Just because this proposed development is in North Kensington and on the site of an existing social housing estate does not give RBKC carte blanche to over-develop the site in a manner that would never be contemplated for new homes in the more privileged parts of the Borough.

We are told that the Housing Allocations register must be reduced – but this must not be done at any cost. Furthermore, any proper analysis of complaints about social housing would identify the problems of providing so many one-bedroomed homes in an over-developed tower block.

Complaints show, for example, that:

- (a) if they are used for couples, they will sooner or later become over-crowded - and at the moment RBKC is unable to transfer its current cadre of over-crowded residents, let alone address any new instances of over-crowding;
- (b) if they are used for single residents, since many of them may have mental health and well-being issues, to “cram” them into a massively unsuitable tower block without proper support (as happens at the moment) will lead inexorably to an escalation in complaints, often about anti-social behaviour, which the Council says it wishes to reduce.

As we do not have sight of the assessment of needs of those on the Housing Register, it is not possible to answer this question realistically.



Feedback from Ward Councillor

What is your preference for the height of the proposed building?

One local resident recollected the initial proposal for the construction of Colvin House in Kingsdown Close, close by and opposite to this site. He pointed out that the original version of only 7 storeys was far too high for that locality and the height of the building was reduced following reasoned objections from the local community.

Given that the sight line from Bramley House and parts of the Silchester Estate and Arthur Court would include yet another tower block, this proposal is unacceptable as it stands. Triggering memories of the Grenfell Tower Fire by developing yet another tower block within this vicinity would be utterly thoughtless – and would put a further burden on local NHS and Social Care services.

Consequently, this block should be no greater than an absolute maximum of 5 storeys high, the same height as Bramley House opposite. It is unacceptable to sacrifice local residents' mental health and well-being just to "cram 'em in".

Please provide any additional comments you have on the height of this building

Local residents have expressed concern about the building being a "9 storey carbuncle" that would not fit in with the existing streetscape. I agree with this view. Others have said they would be happy only with a building that was no more than 3 or 4 storeys high, to match other nearby buildings such as Arthur Court, Kingsnorth House, the Kensington Aldridge Academy, Goodrich Court and all the other blocks along Bramley Road.

I would strongly recommend a review of housing complaints over the last few years before any decision is taken that would worsen the situation of both existing residents and also those whom you propose to rehouse in such an unsuitable and over-developed building.

This perusal will also demonstrate the need for a dedicated disabled parking space for the household allocated to the ground floor accessible property.

Do you support the retention of the existing tree at the front of the site?

Yes, if at all possible – for environmental reasons and to play its part in dealing with the excessively high level of air pollution in this part of the Borough.



Feedback from Ward Councillor

Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the emerging scheme?

Everyone with whom I have spoken within the immediate area supports the concept of using this site to develop social rented housing only. And everyone with whom I have spoken is vehemently opposed to the idea of building yet another tower block in such an unsuitable location.

The various residents and organisations that have drawn this vacant site to the attention of RBKC over the years all – perhaps naively – saw it as being used to finalise the existing terrace of two-storey houses in Silchester Road. The idea of putting a tower block on such an inappropriate site never entered any local resident's mind!

Residents of Silchester Estate have asked for a Local Lettings Policy relating to this new development, similar to that operating on the Lancaster West Estate. They say that they have endured a lot without the compensation or recognition that has been offered elsewhere, despite being so close to Grenfell Tower. They want their views to be taken seriously as a part of the decision making process and serious thought should be given to this request.

Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the presentation or site generally?

Yes. The presentation seems directed to achieve a specific option, the Council's choice of 9 storeys. It does not entertain co-design of the development with local residents, in particular with the residents of Silchester Estate, Bramley House and Arthur Court, all of which are very close indeed to the site.

Local residents felt that the "visuals" were not an accurate representation of the area and would have liked to see a more accurate depiction of the locality.

I was very shocked to hear that the Board of ACAVA have not even informed their tenants of this proposal, let alone consulted with them. I am therefore very grateful indeed to the one ACAVA tenant who attended the second round of consultations to clarify some of the ways these tenants use their open space and the likely effect on them of the current proposals. Her request for a full consultation with the ACAVA tenants about the proposals for their external space should be met. (continued overleaf)



Feedback from Ward Councillor

You state that you have also consulted with the Kensington Aldridge Academy, yet provided no information about the outcome of this consultation. You do not state either whether you “engaged” properly with the Academy, or just told them of your proposal to build a 9 or 16 storey tower block on the site and asked for their comments.

For example, anything overlooking the MUGA would be unacceptable. You mentioned the possibility of putting up screens. If this site is over- developed as proposed, then we would need to know how these would work, especially with regard to safeguarding the children.

How did you find out about the consultation?

I found out about it from the Council as I am one of the local elected representatives.

Other local residents complained that leaflets had not been delivered and they only found out about the consultation by accident. They do not want this consultation to be a “box ticking exercise” but hope (and expect) that their views will be treated seriously.

Some were concerned at what they saw as a rushed process and liked the idea of an open day on the site. Others felt that this consultation was just like a consultation “in the olden days”, with the decision already having been taken.

Do you feel that the presentation informed you how you can provide your thoughts and input as part of the process?

The only possible response to this question is that we will wait to see whether RBKC will take any account of what it has heard from local people and their representatives.

