

*There is now a considerable degree of enthusiasm from residents in Woodberry Down as they feel their views are being listened to and will affect the development.*

## Contact Details

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This case study supports RTPI GPN1: Guidelines on Effective Community Involvement and Consultation available at [www.rtpi.org.uk/item/325/23/5/3](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/325/23/5/3)

Additional case studies relating to community involvement are available from

[www.rtpi.org.uk/item/325/23/5/3](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/325/23/5/3)

[www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

[www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)

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# Effective Community Involvement and Consultation Case Study 1 Woodberry Down, Hackney, London

**How to revitalise residents' participation and consultation in a major urban regeneration programme**

## Key Learning Points

- 1 Don't rely solely on formal structures
- 2 Offer a wide range of opportunities to engage
- 3 Recognise the importance of existing groups

This case study supports RTPI GPN1: Guidelines on Effective Community Involvement and Consultation. <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/593/23/5/3>

## Background

The Woodberry Down regeneration area is located in the northern most part of the London Borough of Hackney, bounded by Manor House Station, Finsbury Park and Green Lanes in the west and two former reservoirs to the south. The New River flows around the southern and northern boundaries of the estate. In addition to this attractive geography, it has an ethnically diverse and dynamic community of around 5,000 which, despite many problems, wishes to remain living on the Woodberry Down Estate. Surveys have revealed that the current Woodberry Down buildings and infrastructure are beyond economic repair. Therefore a complete rebuild is required, making this one of the largest projects in London. Demolition commenced in September 2005 and a phased programme of rebuilding and rehousing will last until 2027.

## Project Description

- Woodberry Down will eventually be a community of over 10,000 people. There will also be a new city academy or secondary school, redeveloped primary school, new health centre, multi-purpose community centre, youth club, business centre, and other community facilities;
- To create a diverse and balanced population new social rented homes will be mixed with private and 'intermediate' (shared equity) homes ranging in size from 1 to 5 bedrooms. All social housing will be built to the 'Parker Morris plus 10%' standard. All homes will have either a balcony or private garden;
- At present Woodberry Down pumps out about 13,000 tonnes of CO2 every year. New homes will be built to a minimum 'Very Good' BREEAM standard, be environmentally friendly and will reduce emissions to 3,500 tonnes;
- Four new parks and two squares are proposed, with play and sports facilities to suit children of different ages. As many trees as possible will be preserved to keep a green feel. Advantage will be made of the New River location and homes will be oriented to overlook the reservoirs;
- New streets will put people first. They will have attractive landscaping, safe pedestrian crossings and cycle routes. Seven Sisters Road, presently effectively an urban motorway, will become a landscaped boulevard. As much of the parking as possible will be located underground.



# Woodberry Down

## The Role of Community Involvement

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Early problems occurred. After four years of discussion with little or no action, residents developed sceptical feelings towards the Local Authority. Many residents felt out on a limb and hadn't been kept up to date with developments, e.g. the Old School Site was demolished, but nothing visible happened. Residents voiced concerns over the levels of social and affordable housing.

Hackney Homes was launched in April 2006. It has developed a very wide variety of methods to actively involve residents and stakeholders, to ensure full and meaningful community involvement. The team recognised that it is unwise to rely solely on formal public consultation structures and groups and is aware that it is important that the wider community is offered a wide range of opportunities to engage in the process. These included:

- **Workshops** very informal and interactive and enabled almost 100 residents, many from 'hard-to-reach' groups to take part in discussions. Collages were pasted from a collection of pictures with comments recorded by the architects to take forward for the masterplan;
- **Focus Groups:** existing focus groups were identified and elected members also attended workshops. Interpreters were present;
- **Newsletters:** were published monthly, providing contact details and a brief overview of current developments. Produced in an easy to read and eye-catching way (also translated into relevant ethnic minority languages);
- **Road Shows:** with a trailer/marquee to enable more flexibility. Also the times varied to allow everyone to attend;
- **Resident Site Visits:** allowed visits to comparable sites around London. A great way to break down barriers in communication, as they were also attended by the developer, architect and housing association;
- **Organised Events:** fun quiz nights to capture those with daytime commitments and community fun days with lots of activities, mainly at weekends. The first fun day in 2005 attracted over 300 residents, the second, in 2006 had over 500 visitors. Particular emphasis was placed on catering for lone parents and getting children involved in the process;
- **Youth Projects:** hoardings around the Old School Site were transformed into a positive statement about the area and young people's contribution to it. The artwork deterred illegal graffiti and gave young people an opportunity to find out about the regeneration;
- **Face to Face/Door to Door:** consultation with residents using questionnaires and surveys;
- **Tabletop:** questioning and open surgeries at various venues within the estate.