

Carpenters Community Plan 2013

Preparation and Consultation Report



Carpenters Community Plan was produced by Carpenters Estate residents, businesses and stakeholders supported by London Tenants Federation and Just Space through a grant awarded by Antipode (an international Journal of Geography) to Professor Loretta Leas, Geography Department, Kings College London, Just Space, London Tenants Federation (LTF) and Southwark Notes Archive Group. UCL Urban Laboratory provided support in printing exhibition materials for the Carpenters Community Plan exhibition. Voluntary support was provided by masters' and PhD students from University College London (the majority planning students; organised through Just Space) and LTF members.

This report provides detailed information on the background work carried out to produce the Carpenters Plan and an analysis of the consultation that was undertaken. There is a short section on the adoption of the Plan and 'next steps'.

The preparation work This included organising;

- four workshops and three walkabouts with residents and other stakeholders;
- an exhibition of the 'draft' community plan, held in four different venues in the Carpenters locality - St Johns Church, the Carpenters and Docklands Community Centre, PA Finlay's and the Carpenters Arms;
- an extensive consultation exercise in which residents and other stakeholders completed consultation papers; either a long survey (containing a summary of the draft plan text and 21 questions relating to the text) or a short survey (asking residents and other stakeholders which of the 10 key objectives of the Community Plan they supported);
- one-to-one in depth interviews with 11 local businesses.

The walkabouts focused on mapping (i) local businesses / economy, (ii) green and open spaces and (iii) access, transport and links with the surrounding area.

The first workshop facilitated discussion on the values important to estate residents; what might be included in a vision statement (looking ten years ahead) and themes of the Community Plan.

Further workshops focused on:

- provision of information and facilitation of discussion on housing tenure and management and ownership of housing and assets;
- the mapping exercises being carried out on the estate, compilation of a list of stakeholders in the area and discussion on the local economy and green and open spaces;
- discussion on interviews carried out with local businesses and stakeholders; the access and transport walkabout; research on refurbishment v demolition and the exhibition /outreach activities.

In the one-to-one interviews, businesses provided information on the number of people they employed and their history of involvement in the area, which provided a picture of the existing local economy as diverse, with a mixture of long-established businesses and new start-ups and a variety of economic activities, including construction and refurbishment, artists studios, small consultancies and entrepreneurs, and providing goods and services for the local population. Businesses shared their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the area, and made suggestions for its improvement which fed directly into the proposals presented in the draft Community Plan.

In total around 60 residents and stakeholders engaged in the preparation work.

The formal consultation was probably a more thorough consultation than any other that has previously been carried on the estate around what residents wanted for their future. It was achieved via a team of volunteers talking to residents at their doors about the draft Community Plan and encouraging them not only to comment on the draft but also to submit additional ideas. It was agreed that the more who engaged with the consultation, the greater the strength of collective ownership of the Plan.

186 individual responses were completed by 157 residential households and 15 businesses and other stakeholders. Of these, 106 completed long surveys or added comments to the short ones (that asked which of the 10 key objectives were supported). The remaining just indicated which of the 10 key objectives they supported. Many completed both the short as well as the long surveys (although the long surveys covered the key objectives anyway).

The vast majority supported the 10 key objectives; an additional 27 said they supported eight or nine of the key objectives and only six of those responding supported smaller numbers of the key objectives.

The following sets out the text of the long consultation survey (in italics), the questions asked (in bold type) and a short analysis of the responses provided for each question.

Visions and Values: *Our community comprises residents of different cultural backgrounds, but is one community that is strong and supportive. It is a mixed community comprising local authority tenants, leaseholders and freeholders. Adults and children feel safe and like living here, and want to benefit from the Olympic Legacy.*

Our neighbourhood, located in the north west of Newham, is well connected, being adjacent to Stratford train, tube and bus stations, shops and the Lea Valley. It has great potential: good green and play spaces, and community facilities, including the Carpenters and Docklands Centre and Tenants Management Organisation's offices. Shops, a local pub, primary school, health centre, the Building Crafts College and East London University are all within the immediate vicinity. New facilities created for the Olympic Games are virtually on our doorstep.

Our community currently feels under threat from top-down plans that have already resulted in dispersal of some estate residents and reduced the use of the facilities and amenities that we depend on and value.

Our vision is for community-led and sustainable improvements that will strengthen cohesion and provide benefit to resident's health and well-being. Homes will be refurbished; local facilities and businesses will be retained and revived; links with the surrounding community, transport, shops and amenities will be improved, ensuring that our valued services, streets and open spaces make a valued contribution to the wider Stratford area. Our community will be strengthened through community ownership of our homes and community facilities

1. Do you support the vision and values?

The visions and values were supported almost unanimously with only three saying they did not support them.

2. Is there more than needs to be added here?

Responses mostly suggested additions that were more appropriate in other sections, such as the need for better children's play areas, or wanting permanent doctors rather than the visions and values.

Some more targeted comments included that there was a need to:

- make better links with adjacent new housing developments and amenities;
- note that there has been systematic 'running down of the homes on the estate' which we would aim to reverse;
- add more on employment;
- ensure safeguards to protect our values and transparency in decision-making.

3. How do you feel your community could be further strengthened?

This question produced a fairly wide variety of responses including those relating to social activities, having regular meetings and consultations and continued support from others including the following:

- social events, picnics, day trips, concerts, quiz nights, activities for families;
- communal gatherings, regular meetings and consultations, working together with this plan;
- continuing to fight destruction; community activism, a conclusive answer to the future of the

- Carpenters' community;
- continued support from the church and local businesses;
- moving people back onto the estate;
- improved environment.

Housing and Environment: Homes on the Carpenters Estate were built in the 1960s. Whilst structurally sound they require refurbishment to meet decent homes and environmental standards. Compelling evidence* shows that in all but the most extreme cases it is cheaper and less damaging both socially and environmentally to refurbish housing estates or tower blocks rather than to demolish them and build anew.

The benefits of the existing combined cooling, heating and power (CCHP) generating facilities at the Olympic Park and Stratford City could be spread more widely. Both Carpenters Estate and the many new private sector homes built locally could benefit from reduced heating costs and more environmentally friendly energy use.

Key action points include:

- We will ensure that improvements to the estate are both socially and environmentally sound and sustainable.
 - We will make the case for refurbishment of all homes on the estate by carrying out robust analyses of costs and benefits, both environmental (embodied energy) and social (including the extreme shortage of social housing).
 - We will seek to provide a CCHP scheme, open to other residents and social and community facilities in the locality.
 - Residents who have been dispersed from the Carpenters Estate and who wish to move back will have a 'right to return'.
 - We will negotiate the best deal possible for leaseholders to ensure costs of refurbishment are fair and affordable.
4. **Since UCL/ Newham Plans have fallen through, do you feel it reasonable to consider all options to save and refurbish all the estate homes and retain them as secure council housing?**
This was almost unanimously supported with only one resident and two businesses disagreeing.
5. **Do you feel more homes could be built on the estate?**
Around two and a half times more said no than yes.
6. **Do you feel you would like to be more involved in long-term decisions about housing and environmental issues on the estate?**
More than two-thirds who responded said they would.

Social and community facilities: Carpenters' Estate has a strong sense of community; many people have lived here for a long time. There are many services and facilities which also have long roots in the area and which are very valuable to the immediate community and to the rapidly growing population in the wider Stratford neighbourhood. This includes the Carpenters' primary school, health centre, Carpenters and Docklands Centre (with its before and after school play care, sports facilities and start-up business spaces), the TMO building, the local pub and local shops. Also, the neighbourhood itself, with its pleasant streets, well-liked buildings and valued communal spaces, as well as the quieter roads which run through it, bring some great urban qualities to what has become a busy, dense and often inaccessible series of urban spaces in the surrounding area. Carpenters' will make a culturally valued, distinctive and lively contribution to the overall mix of spaces in the area.

Specific proposals are to retain, renovate and increase use of existing facilities and amenities through:

- facilitating better links and access to the neighbourhood and to the surrounding facilities;
- strengthening existing community facilities, developing an accessible and vibrant community hub for young and old including leisure, sports, educational and faith activities as well as spaces to meet and socialise;
- improving links with voluntary and community sector groups in Newham;
- seeking community ownership of some key assets such as meeting spaces and leisure facilities;
- building a 'lifetime neighbourhood' (London Plan, 2011) which meets the social and recreational needs of young and old.

7. What facilities and services do you most value on Carpenters Estate

Those valued most, (ordered here with the greatest number first) are: the doctors; the Carpenters and Docklands Centre; the school, the TMO building, local shops, local pubs, open spaces, the police station, transport links.

8. What facilities and services do you think Carpenters could offer to the wider Stratford?

A fair number did not respond to this question. Where they did, they mentioned a variety of the facilities and services that exist on the estate including the social facilities (particularly the Carpenters & Docklands Centre); the school; the computer fair, open / green spaces, safer neighbourhood police officers, shops, pubs, businesses etc.

Others mentioned things they would like to have here (and which might also be offered to the wider Stratford area) – including a multi faith chapel, gym, a pharmacy, dentist, and enlargement of the TMO office for a larger community space. A couple of comments:

- *an open welcome to all for everything for physical and mental health - fitness and socials.*
- *a diverse population, which I believe is good for race relations and people of different races and religions accepting and respecting and background differences they may have.'*

9. What services and amenities would you like to see on the estate?

A wide range of services and amenities were included in responses. Items in order of those mentioned most frequently - (i) additional social / community facilities catering from young and old – for dance drama, exercise, classes and faith activities (ii) a permanent doctor / healthcare facilities (iii) provision of gym (iv) library (v) NHS dentist (vi) launderette / dry cleaners (vii) pharmacy (viii) café.

***Open space:** Carpenters' Estate has a relatively generous provision of green space, a key asset for the Estate and for the wider Stratford area, which should be protected. Green spaces are important for their positive impact on health and well-being, they are crucial for young people, and for biodiversity. With strong densification around the Stratford Town Centre and new high rise residential developments nearby, the green spaces on the Carpenters' Estate are an important part of the mix of urban facilities in the area. Our proposals are:*

- *To keep the Village Green, the largest green space, as a place for young people.*
- *The Multi-Activity Games Area and other play areas should be retained and refurbished, with green (planted) walls and young people's murals to identify the spaces as primarily for children and young people.*
- *To remove unattractive metal gates and fences around the green spaces and to replace these and other walls and fences with hedges and green walls.*
- *To reserve spaces for wild meadows and for gardening which can be supported through gardening clubs and groups of residents.*
- *To invite nearby schools and colleges, especially the Carpenters' Primary School, to help plan the games, wild and garden spaces which can be used for skills training, nature learning and playing.*
- *An outdoor gym for older and younger people could be integrated with running and cycle tracks around the estate, and with the outdoor table tennis and gym facilities in the nearby Greenway.*

10. What kinds of sports and play spaces would you like to see in the Carpenters Estate?

Items in order of those mentioned most frequently were: (i) gym (outdoor) (ii) better play facilities for children (including adventure playground) (iii) football, followed by tennis, basketball, badminton, table tennis.....chess (some proposed as indoor activities).

There was a strong plea for more / better spaces for young people but also for spaces that would accommodate people of all ages / family friendly activities. Others suggested:

- a kid's tree house,
- an open film showing area and

- an area where people ‘could be taught the joys of garden and wildlife on the estate and where preservation green could be taught to residents’.

A fair number said there needed to be ‘no dogs allowed’ and / or separate dog facilities.

11. Would you be interested in gardening activities in the green spaces? Or would you like to see more decorative planting, flowers, creepers, roses? Or more wild spaces?

Around 15% of those who responded said they want all listed here; almost half of said that they would like to see more decorative planting (including wild flowers), and more than a quarter wanted to see some areas used for gardening and vegetable growing. Many responded by highlighting gardening as communal activity’. Comments included:

- more gardening opportunities would mean residents can get involved in community gardening competitions or having ‘own veg patch’ to grow vegetables etc. Even children could have activities or growing competitions;
- having a gardening club would be good, with people who might help with gardens of individual house-owners who are not managing to look after their gardens, or there should be a low or cost free way of getting your garden done via the TMO;
- gardening activities is a must as it gets people together, talking and discussing growing issues;
- it would be good for the community to give over some of the green space to vegetable growing. This would be a great way for people to get together and provide a little cheap healthy food for people on the estate.

Others issues highlighted were: the need to ensure good maintenance; for provision of a few benches scattered around; to keep dogs off the green spaces and for more trees. Concern was expressed by some that too many green areas have been built on by developers , impacting on wildlife / general bio-diversity. One response said:

- It would be nice to have a garden/ park area where older residents could met with the younger ones and plant together, pass on growing skills etc, get to know each other. Maybe a vegetable area, benches to sit and relax in nice weather as older people feel so isolated.

A few said that they didn’t like the metal fencing around green spaces and that it should be removed. One comment was -

- I would like to see more use of well-designed timber equipment, fences etc. as these will be less brutal than concrete and steel. I would also like to see the creek/river area opened up to the public.

12. Would you like to see all the green spaces preserved or do you think some other uses might be a good idea (e.g. more shops, offices, rooms for small businesses or studios)?

The majority want to retain all the green spaces or would like to see more - at a proportion of 6:1. Those who felt that some might be used for shops etc. generally did so with the proviso that the majority of green spaces be retained.

Transport and Access: Public transport to Stratford is very good, with underground, rail and bus connections. But the Carpenters Estate can feel cut off at times. And all the road and rail lines mean that the Stratford area can be very hard to navigate, with many barriers to movement. Our vision is to improve links, access and connections with transport networks and with the surrounding facilities. This will help to develop a closer relationship between the estate and the wider Stratford area. It will make a walkable and pleasant part of Stratford more accessible to public transport and public use. At the moment the estate feels very safe, so these changes will need to be done gradually and the impact monitored. Greater footfall through the estate could make the streets feel safer, and will mean better use and viability of local facilities and services, such as green spaces, recreation, training, shops and businesses. Three key improvements are proposed:

13. Do you think additional pedestrian traffic will impact on the estate?

The vast majority do not feel that additional pedestrian traffic will impact detrimentally on the estate

or feel that it will make the area safer, will be good for local businesses and will make the estate more vibrant.

Only one response raised concern that it may not be so 'nice and quiet' and three that it may increase safety issues. One mentioned that there might be an issue once West Ham takes over the Olympic Stadium and possibly produce many more walking through the estate. Another suggested that there may be a need to monitor changes. Around eight said they felt there may be an issue of additional litter – and so either litter bins or additional cleaners may be necessary

One resident noted that there is already increased pedestrian traffic through the estate – from the developments adjacent / near to the estate.

14. What do you think of the proposed access points to the station and Aquatics Centre

These were almost unanimously and strongly supported – 'for us to be included / integrated in the wider Stratford area'. Only two raised issues of concern and one was 'unsure'.

One suggested that the access point at the station is actually an escape route and thus cannot generally be opened up. One noted concern that Carpenters Road should be kept shut or should have humps to slow traffic down – (near the primary school).

While supporting the proposals one suggested that if opening up the access to the station created a large increase in pedestrian traffic that there may be a need to bring back the police on the estate.

15. What kind of role do you think the estate can play in the wider Stratford area?

This question generated responses suggesting the estate as a good influence; as a model of how things can work, as a strong community that stands up for its rights; as a place - providing decent low cost homes and a good mix of residential and businesses. A selection of some comments:

- We could be an influence on the rest of England – show people how to be.
- Continue to provide decent low-rise homes to local people.
- Maintaining a positive social presence as opposed to pure commercial development.
- It could play a big part if more people were here.
- Carpenters estate has the potential to be a true example of Olympic Legacy – showing not just Newham but the world, how empowered communities can derive low carbon and sustainable living in a diverse and cohesive community.
- Provision of good community / social facilities.
- I feel we are key players and a beacon of light in Newham.
- The estate can be a model for ideal community estate and for others to follow what it should be.
- Perhaps as one of the few areas to survive the gentrification process. It would be nice to think so.
- A strong community who stand up for their rights and the whole area will have a positive view of the estate.
- The estate may be able to support young people in achieving their future ambitions by playing a more active role in engaging with schools and colleges and to build a stronger relationship.
- I feel the Carpenters estate is the only part of Stratford that feels homely. So the wider Stratford can get a feel of what we really experience; a sense of community spirit.
- If we visualise a refurbished Carpenters Estate with more residents in flats and consider the positively due to more green space resulting in a friendlier neighbourhood, we could imagine that this will be a positive impact in Newham and other estates could follow – people will be happier.

Local Economy: Our vision for the local economy recognises existing local businesses and takes account of the skills and needs of local residents. Our main proposals are:

- Existing local businesses should be able to continue to operate in the area in the future.
- The depopulation of the Carpenters Estate should be reversed in order to enable businesses to return to previous health and grow.

- *The success of the Carpenters and Docklands Centre in providing space for start-up businesses should be recognised, retained and potentially further developed.*
- *The area's construction, maintenance and refurbishment firms, artists' studios, Building Crafts College and rich history in such activities should be recognised as assets.*
- *Local businesses should be involved in developing the plans for the area. Lack of information and uncertainty is having a further negative effect on businesses.*
- *Transport and access should be improved, including re-opening Carpenters Road, opening up the Carpenters Estate entrance to Stratford Station, and removing parking restrictions in Rowse Close.*
- *Basic maintenance of the Carpenters Estate should be initiated e.g. removal of graffiti, replacement of street lights, removal of litter, etc.*
- *Newham Council's procurement process should be made more accessible for local businesses.*
- *Temporary uses / pop-ups should be introduced to provide space for microenterprises and workshops.*
- *Links with local education and training colleges should be improved, and a joined up local work placement scheme and library and community hub introduced.*
- *Local employment and living wage policies should be introduced.*

16. Do you have any comment on the proposals (re the local economy)?

More than a third of residents who responded did not answer this question – perhaps not really feeling they could. However of those that did respond, the majority said they were supportive of the proposals; that they were good, very good or in one instance ‘inspiring’. Only three of those responding said that they did not support the proposals.

One said ‘I don’t agree with the Living Wage policy being adopted solely on the carpenters. The national living wage should prevail.’

17. Do you want to see changes in the local economy? If so, what and why?

Most who responded were positive to change in the local economy and only nine said they didn’t want to see change. Suggestions included: repopulating the estate, retaining local business and developing more, having more apprenticeships and up-skilling of local residents, having more local jobs schemes, help for young start-ups and a work placement scheme and a suggestion that the TMO should employ local people. A selection of comments below:

- There is too much focus on retail. There should be more workspaces where people make things – such as upholstery, stone masonry, and carpentry. The Building Crafts College could go up a storey to provide workspaces and a work placement scheme.
- Would be nice to see some fresh produce shops / stalls – this would give some character and provide a quality alternative to supermarkets – opportunities for local entrepreneurs.
- Economic changes and development can really change lives around here.
- I would like to see more businesses and more jobs for people.
- More pay means more money going back into the local community.
- There should be more of a mix of things. Skilled work is dying out; this needs to be reversed. There should be trades work so people can get skills to do positive things.
- Can you change any of this? It would be good to have change so that more local people get jobs.
- I believe Newham Council (possibly with sponsorship from local businesses) could put more finance into the estate and surrounding infrastructure and facilities and this could be good for flying the flag for London example to other big cities around the world and how communities surrounding large landmarks; namely the Olympic site in this case, can work.

18. How can we improve links between local businesses and residents?

Most suggestions made in response to this were around advertising locally; encouraging local residents to use local businesses (including the TMO) and local businesses to employ local residents and train youngsters; better communication (including online and social media) / meetings between

residents and businesses; helping businesses to organise meetings and workshops and showcase local businesses to seek local employees. Also suggested was:

- setting up of a committee to look after our interests; establishing relationships to integrate business needs with local interest;
- getting local businesses more involved with the community possibly contributing sponsorship and ideas for improvements of the area and acceptance of how they exist together and work together in the community
- businesses could lower prices for local residents

One resident said – the businesses are seen here, like the residents, as ‘lower class’. We should have a good relationship with them.

Community Ownership: Our aim is genuine bottom up ‘regeneration’, with our community’s priorities at the top of the agenda. We feel that the best way to achieve this is through our community taking greater control of what happens to our homes, facilities and amenities. We are investigating different types of community ownership including:

- Community ownership (and not only management) of the Carpenters Estate homes, through a community owned housing association or a housing co-op or a community land trust
- Community ownership of community facilities and amenities, for example by a social enterprises or a community development trust.
- A Neighbourhood Plan, taking up the opportunity in the Government’s Localism Act

A Neighbourhood Plan has legal weight and would receive funds from developments in the area. To happen, it needs a wide range of support from everyone – local residents, local businesses, voluntary sector, schools, Universities and health centres and others – and the setting up of a Neighbourhood Forum. We will work carefully to adopt a model that our community feels best fits our needs.

19. What needs to be done to ensure our community voice is heard and taken into proper consideration?

Many responses focus on the need for regular meetings, publicity, newsletters and news sheets so that everyone knows what’s going on; the need for more involvement in decision-making / consultations; need to keep people together – with positive activities; the need to have strong representative voices and to maintain community pressure on the council and LLDC.

The idea that a regular committee / Neighbourhood Forum coming together to represent wider interests of the community and local businesses was suggested by a fair number.

A selection of specific comments:

- The TMO struggles to get involvement. We need something wider to link people with businesses and stakeholders.
- Residents need to take greater control and ownership of facilities and how it is managed. Need the community to be aware of the situation and need them to not be intimidated by the council.
- Kill off any ‘regeneration plans and not move housing stock to housing associations.

20. How do you feel about community ownership on the Carpenters Estate?

Around 50% of those who have responded to this question in the long survey say that this is a good idea. Only one disagreed and five said they don’t know enough and want more information. Five argued specifically for a Neighbourhood Plan and a variety of other answers related to ‘people power’.

In conversations at the door it was clear that residents were speaking specifically around community facility ownership here. Some specific comments / clarifications:

- We wouldn’t want to lose rights as a council tenant.

- Community decision-making, amenities is owned by us.
- I like the idea, but would like to ensure that there are substantial checks and balances as well as transparency, the devil is in the detail).
- If it keeps our community together and it's been tried and tested and it works, am all for it.
- I believe the estate should be run by the people, for the people and do away with any housing associations and any management organised associations, possibly looked over by direct Newham Council scrutiny and keeping the estate safe and solid.

21. How do you feel about bringing the different parts of the Carpenters Estate together in a Neighbourhood Forum?

A large majority of those who responded support this idea (although clear when speaking to people at the door that not all understood this as a formal Neighbourhood Forum for establishing a Neighbourhood Plan (via the Localism Act). However broadly it is clear that almost all do want to see the development of a Forum that represents a range of people and organisations as a way of 'ensuring local people have a say in (a wide range of) local policies'.

Responses included:

- United we stand, divided we fall.
- Vital.
- We need something that is genuine in representing us.
- We need younger people involved. A forum of different interests would be good; as one estate we should all be united together.
- The forum should set up a website to access publications and seek views from the public.
- Excellent if that's possible; it will help widen options and acknowledge that two minds are always better than one.
- I believe all residents on the estate should have a representative voice. This does not exist through the resident steering group structure. The Neighbourhood Forum will be inclusive of residents and will enable for direct engagement between residents and other partners e.g. Newham Council

Adoption of the Carpenters Community Plan and next steps: The Carpenters Community Plan was formally adopted at a meeting on the Carpenters Estate on 3rd September 2013. A group of residents and businesses / stakeholders volunteered to present the Community Plan to the London Legacy Development Corporation in the near future, hoping that it may influence the LLDC's Local Plan. The LLDC's developing Local Plan will go through its next (but not final) stage of consultation in November this year. Others have volunteered to look at taking the Community Plan further and to consider a Neighbourhood Plan if resources can be identified.