



[Partners in **Change**]

CASE STUDY: BUILDING CONSENSUS ON THE BISHOPSFIELD ESTATE, HARLOW

Bishopsfield in Harlow is a mixed tenure estate with one third of the homes each owned by private owners, Harlow District Council and East Thames. Because of its unconventional design and construction and need for resources and innovative solutions, the estate had been designated a 'priority estate' by the council.

There had been some initial work presenting options to the residents of the area and some consultation around these. Some of the options were quite controversial. Partners in Change was then jointly commissioned by Harlow Council and East Thames to work closely with residents and help build a consensus on the way forward for the estate.

Because of the controversy surrounding some of the options, it was difficult to assess general opinion across the tenures. The earlier surveys had not had a particularly good response rate and the results mainly reflected the views of one tenure group.

Our first job was to get a good cross section of opinion across the estate. Following an introductory newsletter, we set out to knock on as many doors on the estate as possible and ask what people understood about the current review and what they thought needed to be done. We spoke to over 50% of the residents and, importantly, we built up a picture of the views of those people whose voices had not been heard.

We followed this up with engaging residents in the looking at the stock condition issues on the estate and held some walkabouts for residents to examine the surveyors' findings at first hand and then question the surveyors.

We needed to find out the views of council tenants on the condition of their homes and possible options such as stock transfer since this was one of the key issues. To find this out, we held a number of well-attended focus groups with council tenants where we probed these issues in depth.

Finally, we brought together all our findings in an exhibition and report and held some drop-ins where residents could learn about these and make their views known.

A consensus did emerge based on retaining the homes and exploring stock transfer. Partners in Change was recommissioned to help move the plans forward to the next stage.