



Living in Grahame Park

Summary of benchmark research on the
social impacts of regeneration
commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis

May 2024



About this report

This report summarises a social impact assessment carried out in summer and autumn of 2023 on Grahame Park Estate. It looks at the experiences, attitudes, and everyday life of people living on Grahame Park and the impact of the regeneration programme, two decades years after it began. This assessment will act as a benchmark for future assessments to measure progress against. It was conducted early in the second stage of the regeneration, which has until now faced significant delays.

Social Life was commissioned by the housing association Notting Hill Genesis to carry out an assessment of the social impacts of regeneration, and to understand how local priorities and needs can inform future phases of planning, design and management. This summary captures residents' perceptions of belonging, wellbeing, and relationships with neighbours and between people from different backgrounds. It explores how the built environment and local services and supports promote community life, and whether people feel that they can influence local decisions and how they come together to take action to improve the area.

We would like to thank all the residents, agencies and stakeholders who gave their time and shared their perspectives and insights. We thank Colindale Communities Trust for their willingness to support us in reaching people without emails and re-distributing vouchers. We thank the individuals and organisations who took time out of their schedule to support this research, take part in workshops or be interviewed in stakeholder interviews.

WHAT WE DID

A mix of approaches was used. This included:

- **interviews with 11 stakeholders**
- **street interviews of 203 residents** carried out by Social Life Field team. We also hired and trained a local community researcher. We offered a £5 voucher to every interviewee who completed a survey and interviews took 30 minutes on average.
- **walking interviews** - carried out with 10 residents living in new and old homes and different tenures
- **workshops** with agencies and service providers
- **group discussions** with design and delivery teams
- **a site survey** carried out by Matter Architecture

DATA COMPARISONS

The data has been analysed by tenure and comparable areas. It will also serve as a benchmark for future social impact assessments

“Comparable areas” are neighbourhoods which share similar characteristics, based on national survey and census data. This method has been developed by Social Life.

*For more on this method, see www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

OF RESIDENTS
INTERVIEWED

203

OF
STAKEHOLDERS
INTERVIEWED

8

OF
WORKSHOPS

6

SITE
SURVEY

OF WALKING
INTERVIEWS

7

GRAHAME PARK ESTATE

- estate boundary
- existing buildings
- new buildings

About Grahame Park

Grahame Park Estate, named after Claude Grahame-White, is a housing estate built in the 1970s on the site of the old Hendon Aerodrome in Northwest London. The estate was built as a collaboration between the GLC and Barnet Council to provide quality and affordable housing. It has housed a diverse population throughout the years with roots in East London, Ireland and many countries and cultures all over the world. Many people have fond memories of growing up at Grahame Park, but over the past two decades the estate has acquired a reputation for being an unsafe, run down area.

Grahame Park's regeneration process has been protracted and complicated. Almost half of the residents we interviewed had been on the estate for more than 11 years, and many remember the full history of the last twenty years of regeneration. The lack of significant physical change on the estate over the decades, and the delays and revisions to the original scheme approved in a referendum in 2003 have impacted trust in the regeneration partners. By the end of the proposed regeneration period of 2036-40, the regeneration will have lasted over thirty years, defining many lives of people living and born on the estate.

Current plans for the regeneration of the Grahame Park Estate¹ will create around 4,000 new homes. A new road - Bristol Avenue - is planned as well as improvements to the pedestrian and cycling network. As the next phases of the regeneration are at early stages this research will inform their future development.

"Thank you so much. We felt heard." - Stakeholder interviewee's feedback

"I hope you and your colleagues had a fruitful day with your surveys. I was impressed with how you all stayed and listened to what residents told you after the survey."

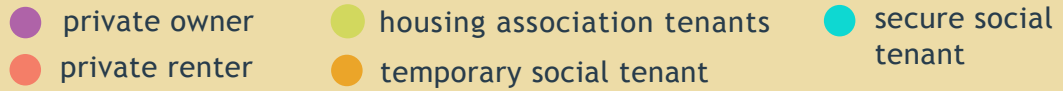
- Resident's feedback

Who did we speak to?

- We interviewed residents across the breadth of the estate.
- 48% of those interviewed were working 10% were self-employed. 17% of the people we interviewed were retired.
- 29% of all the working people who were interviewed said they were working from home or remotely.
- Out of the residents we interviewed 25% were from Black African origin, 13% of residents described themselves as "White Other" and 17% as White British. Other significant groups were "Any other Asian" - 8.5%, Asian Indian - 8% and Black Caribbean - 5%.
- 51% of all street interviewees have children. 32% of temporary residents indicated they had three or more children.

1. <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/grahamepark>

RESIDENT SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

203

44%

33%

63%

63%

57%

LIVING WITH ONE OR MORE CHILDREN

ETHNICITY

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------------|
| 23% | 6% | 29% | 27% | 25% | White British |
| 25% | 31% | 33% | 39% | 34% | Black or black British |
| 28% | 34% | 21% | 12% | 21% | Asian or Asian British |
| 13% | 19% | 8% | 10% | 11% | Other white |
| 5% | 3% | 0% | 7% | 4% | Mixed |
| 8% | 6% | 8% | 5% | 6% | Other |

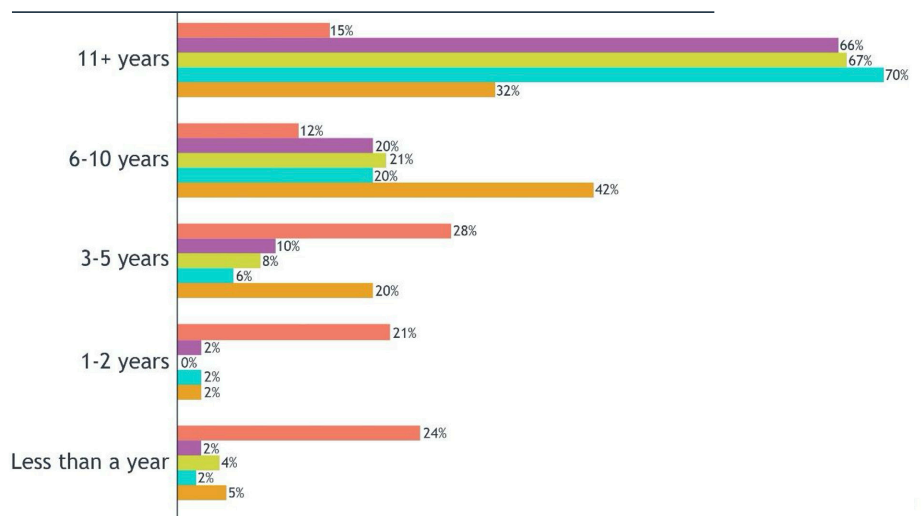
EMPLOYMENT STATUS

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------------|
| 5% | 18% | 4% | 20% | 4% | Self-employed |
| 58% | 49% | 46% | 37% | 48% | Paid employment |
| 8% | 12% | 4% | 10% | 11% | Looking for work/Unemployed |
| 28% | 6% | 25% | 7% | 21% | Retired |

AGE GROUP

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 45% | 50% | 40% | 43% | 48% | 18-24 |
| 3% | 11% | 3% | 2% | 6% | 25-29 |
| 16% | 20% | 20% | 30% | 11% | 30-44 |
| 22% | 16% | 26% | 23% | 21% | 45-64 |
| 15% | 4% | 11% | 3% | 14% | 65+ |

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED ON THE ...?



*all data from self-reported tenure

Monitoring social impacts

In 2024 the Grahame Park Co-ordinating Group came together and agreed on five outcomes they want to achieve through the regeneration. This was based on the social impact framework used on Grahame Park Estate since 2017.



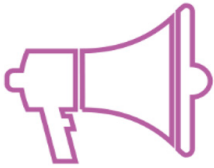
Economic inclusion and resilience

Residents, voluntary sector and businesses prosper economically.



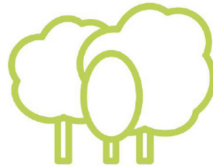
Health and wellbeing

Residents are healthy and enjoy good quality of life and wellbeing.



Influencing change

The regeneration is underpinned by strong partnerships and resident engagement.



Placemaking and housing

Residents benefit from suitable public spaces, social infrastructure and housing.



Community and safety

Residents are part of a strong community and feel safe in their neighbourhood.

The social impact framework developed in 2024 will serve as the monitoring tool for the future social impact assessments of the Grahame Park Regeneration.

The results

The social impact assessments results combine the results of the resident survey and the site survey, with the perspectives of stakeholders, residents interviewed in walking interviews and the strategic partners, service providers involved in workshops.

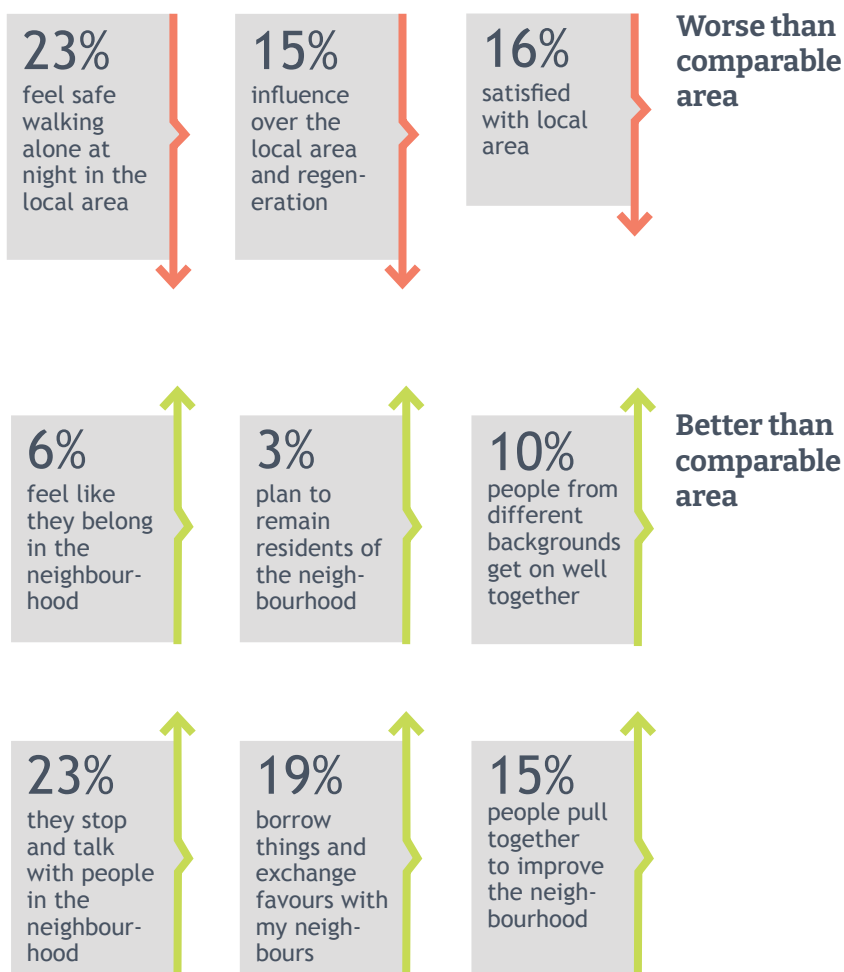
In summer 2023 we found an area which had been plagued by structural issues for decades, with entrenched social problems that had been exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis and fallout from the pandemic.

Grahame Park social sustainability framework 2024

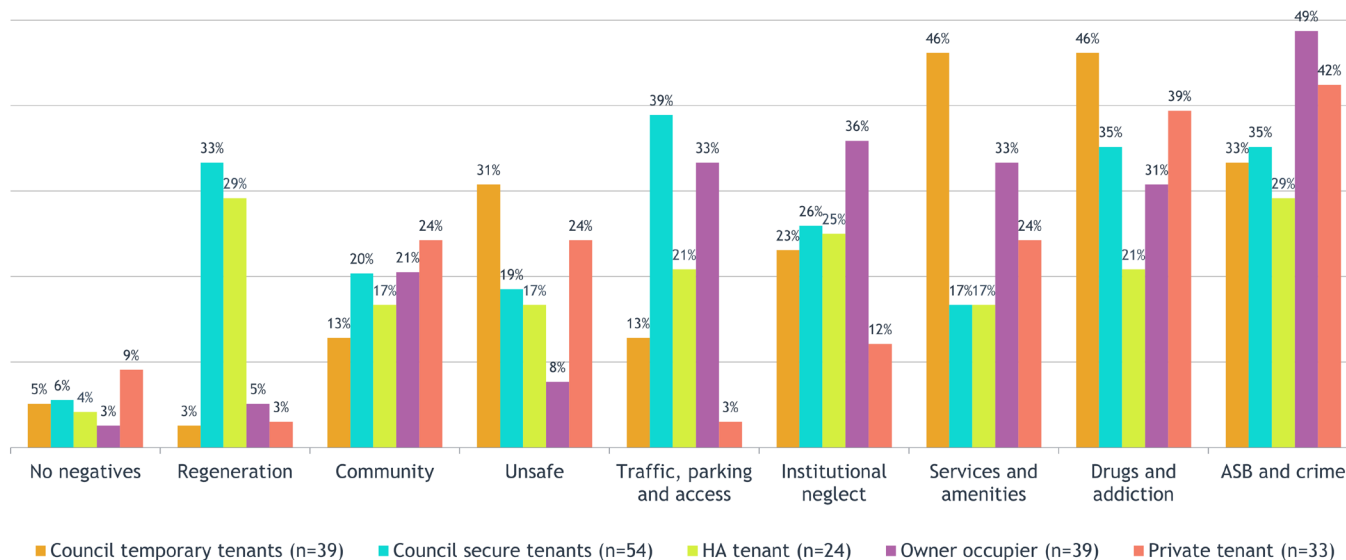


Comparable data

- In comparison to areas considered to have similar social, economic and geographic characteristics, Grahame Park residents report more positive results than would be expected in their perceptions of relationships between people from different backgrounds, people pulling together to improve the neighbourhood, belonging and neighbourliness - both borrowing things and exchanging favours and regularly stopping and talking to neighbours.
- In comparison to national averages, Grahame Park residents report more positive results than would be expected in their perceptions of neighbourliness - both borrowing things and exchanging favours and regularly stopping and talking to neighbours. (For some indicators results were more positive but by a very small percentage).
- They have more negative perceptions than the national average than people living in comparable areas for their perceptions of: Safety, Influence over local decision making, Overall satisfaction with the area, Intentions to remain resident in the future.



RESIDENT'S REPORTED CHALLENGES ON GRAHAME PARK



The experience of people living in different tenures

- The name “Grahame Park” has a polarising perception, especially outside of the estate. Many residents report conflicted feelings about the area. However, alongside this is a significant feeling of local pride amongst some residents.
- Grahame Park is defined by a strong sense of community observable across people living in all tenures. When asked what the top positives of the area are, the people, neighbours and sense of community emerge strongly as the top reason for why people like living in the area.
- Transport links and the location, in good proximity to Colindale and Mill Hill, are strong positives, closely followed by people’s appreciation of the services and amenities available in and around the estate.
- Anti-social behaviour and crime consistently are the top challenge facing the area. There is a general feeling that the design of the estate, combined with lack of maintenance, surveillance and passive security has created a perfect environment for anti-social behaviour.
- Drug dealing, usage and the presence of drug addicts, as well as addiction issues are the second highest issue reported.
- The regeneration process was cited as a difficulty especially for secure council tenants and housing association tenants. Overcrowding, higher density and the disruption caused by construction such as noise, fencing and access for bin lorries are seen as problems. Lack of engagement was also raised.
- The cumulative effect of all the difficulties on Grahame Park affects how residents respond to the regeneration, and how they experience agencies’ communications and engagement.



Health and wellbeing

- Health in Grahame Park is influenced by people's financial condition and ability to access services and support. Access to GPs was consistently brought up as a difficulty on the estate.
- Mental health is an endemic issue and needs to be tackled as a priority. Disability and access were recurring themes across the residents' responses.
- The wellbeing of different communities is specific to their intersectionality. We encountered different perceptions about who is struggling the most on the estate, specifically older people, single parents, children and young people, disabled and vulnerable people.
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol are pervasive issues, many people report that the area's reputation and physical design attract people with substance misuse problems.

"A lot on this estate experience mental health issues. A lot feel isolated, we can't go to their place, we point them in the right direction, those with mental health problems, they don't go away, they need more support and checking up on them."

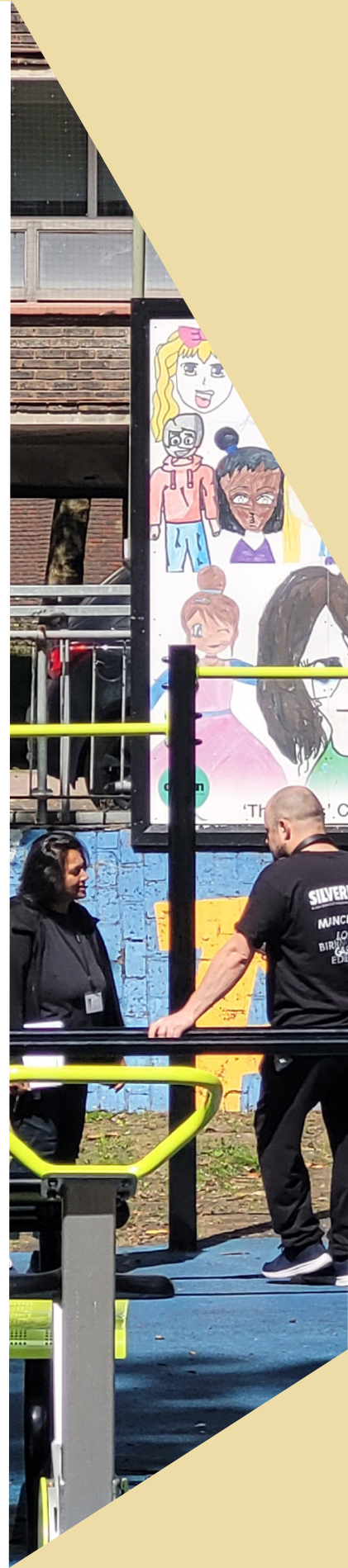
- Street interviewee

16%

of all responses mentioned older people as the ones struggling most on Grahame Park

11%

of all responses mentioned medical facilities as where they seek support.





Placemaking and housing



- Overall, people report lack of amenities and social infrastructure in the area.
- The physical condition of the estate, and the lack of community spaces and facilities, is not supportive of residents' individual and collective wellbeing.
- Grahame Park residents find the local green and open spaces important for socialising. However, lack of play areas is one of the key issues for people living in the area.
- Urban realm quality - neglect, the state of pavement, accessibility, walkability and lighting are consistently rated negatively.
- However, transport, schools, health services and the nearby parks are all strong local assets in addition to a range of supportive third sector organisations who are very active and are valued locally.
- Amongst housing related issues residents reported were unhappiness with their housing quality and dissatisfaction with responses to ongoing housing issues. Maintenance of housing stock was the main reason - issues such as leaks, pests and security.

**Better than
comparable
area**

6%

feel like
they belong
in the
neighbour-
hood



3%

plan to
remain
residents of
the neigh-
bourhood



**Worse than
comparable
area**

16%

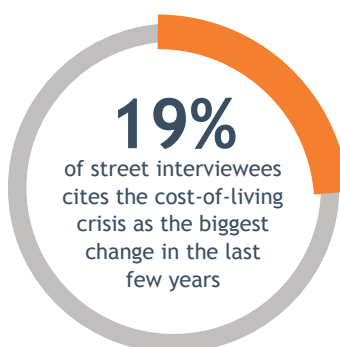
satisfied
with area
as a place
to live





Economic inclusion and resilience

- The cost-of-living crisis has impacted all residents on the estate has impacted some people disproportionately. There is an increase in foodbank use. The cumulative impact of the COVID pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis were often quoted. Several respondents named the rise in Council Tax and service charges as further exacerbating their struggle.
- People work remotely and at home post-COVID however the local economic and social infrastructure is not there to support their wellbeing. Lack of local amenities such as shops, post office, and an ATM were highlighted by residents.
- Many residents are in low-paid and precarious working conditions, however, there is a perception that there is no progression. Low-income residents are perceived as the group that is struggling the most.
- Local organisations and business require further support. Community centres and organisations, family and friends, the Old Library, GPs and medical facilities emerged as the most used places for support. Community centres and organisations mentioned by name included Colindale Communities Trust, Centre for Excellence, Jahiem's Justice Centre and the Loop.



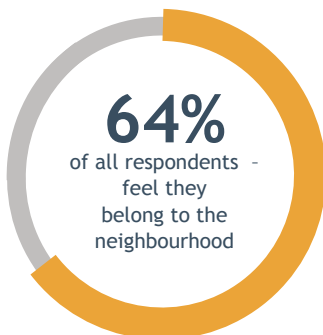
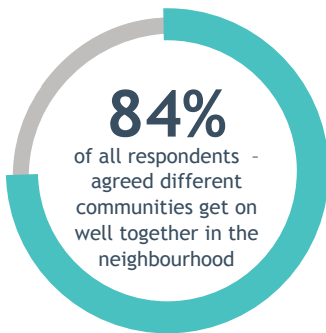
“There are different sets of communities: Church of England, Somali community.” “Culturally you have the Jain centre - another set of community, it is quite mix and match - you haven’t got one big community. There is a very big mix.”

- Stakeholder interviewee

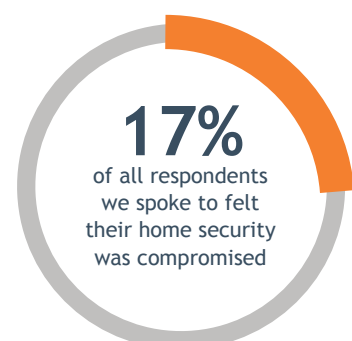




Community and safety



- Grahame Park has a strong community which is seen as the main positive of the area by residents. People interviewed are more likely than those living in comparable areas to engage with their neighbours, stop and talk to people and exchange favours. There is a strong feeling of belonging but an undercurrent of worries about it being eroded.
- Safety, anti-social behaviour, crime and drugs are the main difficulties which residents in Grahame Park experience. Grahame Park residents are significantly less likely to feel safe walking home at dark than people living in comparable areas.
- The Old Library is seen as a key resource by part of the community; however, many residents are unaware of the services they can access there.
- Increase in police presence is a polarising factor. Several respondents reported that they have been profiled and some people pointed to police presence as a negative experience. The move of the police station outside the estate is seen as a negative.
- Insecure tenants report a desire to remain a resident in the area. The majority of the insecure residents we spoke to had lived on the estate for over six years.
- There has been a reported increase in community tensions. Social isolation post-COVID and social tensions were reported. We also observed some comments around overt racism, bias against minorities, new arrivals and diverse cultures.





Influencing change

- There is a complicated picture of belonging at Grahame Park and of residents' understanding of the area's identity and history. Some people and local organisations care strongly about the area.
- There is a historic mistrust towards institutions among residents, resulting from a perceived neglect of the area and delayed regeneration. Residents report a lack of trust in the Council and Barnet Homes and worries about police presence, less so in other institutions.
- Among the residents we interviewed, there is a distinct split in perceptions of the regeneration. A third have a negative perception of the changes happening, with a fifth expressing neither positive nor negative feelings. The highest level of dissatisfaction is amongst the secure council and Barnet Homes tenants.
- A little less than a half of interviewed residents reported a positive feeling about the change happening in the regeneration. Most of the housing association and private tenants interviewed had positive feelings.
- Most of the residents interviewed disagree that they have influence over the regeneration process with almost half voicing strong disagreement. A majority of both insecure and secure council tenants when asked if they have influence interviewed strongly disagree. There is a high level of dissatisfaction with the consultation process across all tenancies.
- Better partnerships between different regeneration partners and service organisations are emerging but need to be better aligned. The experience of the pandemic was seen to have increased cooperation.

60%

of all respondents
have not volunteered
in local activities
or networks

75%

of all respondents
feel they do not
have influence over
the regeneration



Developing a Social Impact Framework

- We observed a patchy implementation of the 2017 Neighbourhood Theory of Change. Few service organisations were aware of it and the ones that were only aligned with the four broad themes. The indicators within the framework were not being used by stakeholders and partners.
- Strategic partners, including Barnet Council, Barnet Homes and health agencies, need to own the new framework. It naturally sits within the remit of the newly re-constituted Grahame Park Co-ordinating Group.
- We expanded the existing framework to incorporate issues emerging from the research including the voice and influence of residents; housing and public realm quality; and social infrastructure. To help this we carried out four workshops with Notting Hill Genesis, delivery, strategic partners and the Grahame Park Co-ordinating Group.



Conclusion

- The assessment has shown that Grahame Park is a diverse estate hosting a multitude of different communities with strong ties to the area. These are based on multiple sometimes overlapping factors, including around tenancy, housing type, length of stay on the estate, religious and ethnic lines, to name a few. There are many strong communities, but no overarching voice of the estate.
- Grahame Park's residents are experiencing the physical changes in the built environment in different ways. There is dissatisfaction with the state of the urban realm and a sizeable minority of residents are unhappy about the quality and security of housing.
- Grahame Park's boundaries are clearly defined by the original estate's layout. However, they are also porous, demonstrated by the different understandings of the estate's footprint among stakeholders and residents. The continuous regeneration is blurring the original boundaries further. All residents considering themselves as belonging to Grahame Park should be considered as having a stake in the regeneration.

ABOUT SOCIAL LIFE

Social Life was set up by The Young Foundation in 2012 to work on innovation and placemaking. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live. We work in the UK and internationally.

THIS REPORT

This research was carried out by Social Life researchers and field team, with inputs from Matter Architecture on the built environment site assessment.

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