

The WDCO Board response to the Masterplan currently awaiting approval by Hackney

Some considerations – should we support or oppose the overall proposal – a discussion paper

Key areas to refine include:

- **Comparison between the original and current proposals** – particularly the jump in unit numbers and its impact on infrastructure.
- **Planning policy considerations** – ensuring the critique aligns with key local and London-wide planning frameworks.
- **Impact on approved application vs. current proposal** – demonstrating why this level of densification is unacceptable in this context.

Once refined, we can seek further advice to strengthen the case against over-densification.

Looking forward to your thoughts.

1. Infrastructure Strain & Overcapacity Risks

The proposed increase in density, with up to 3,200 additional homes and building heights of up to 21 storeys, will place substantial pressure on local infrastructure:

- **Transport Capacity:** Manor House and Stamford Hill stations, as well as bus services, are already at capacity. The proposed increase in residents will exacerbate overcrowding, with no clear commitments to improving public transport links.
- **Public Services:** Increased population will lead to greater demand for GPs, schools, hospitals, and emergency services. The masterplan does not commit to any new healthcare or educational facilities to meet this demand.
- **Utilities & Waste Management:** The existing sewerage, water supply, and electricity infrastructure is not equipped to handle the increased density, which could lead to water shortages, power failures, and overloaded waste collection services.

Request: A full infrastructure assessment must be conducted before any approval is granted, with clear guarantees that transport, healthcare, education, and utilities will be upgraded before new homes are occupied.

2. Social Housing Provision & Broken Promises

The increased density raises serious concerns about social housing provision and affordability:

- **Social Housing Reduction:** The new application suggests that fewer homes will be delivered as social rent properties than originally promised. Many units are being categorised under “affordable rent,” which is significantly higher than traditional social rents and unaffordable for many residents.
- **Unaffordable Homes:** Many existing tenants who move into new-build units face sharp rent increases, pricing them out of the estate. A significant proportion of the proposed “affordable” units are not truly affordable to local residents.
- **Displacement Risk:** With the affordability crisis worsening, more families may be forced into temporary accommodation or moved away from their community, breaking Hackney Council’s original commitment that all tenants would have a new home on the estate.

Request: A binding guarantee that the originally promised level of genuinely affordable, social-rent housing will be upheld across all phases, with full transparency on tenure mix.

3. Daylight & Sunlight Issues

The significant increase in density and height will severely impact natural light levels for existing and new residents:

- **Overshadowing of Existing Homes:** Many current residents will see drastically reduced daylight and increased overshadowing, particularly those in lower-rise buildings near the new high-density blocks.
- **Poor Light Quality in New Homes:** The proposed block layouts and increased density will limit natural light penetration into new homes, leading to dark, poorly ventilated living spaces.
- **Failure to Meet Standards:** The proposed massing of new buildings does not appear to fully comply with the BRE (Building Research Establishment) daylight and sunlight standards, which are essential for residents' well-being.

Request: A comprehensive daylight/sunlight study must be conducted with full public disclosure of results. Adjustments must be made to ensure all homes receive adequate daylight, in compliance with BRE standards.

4. The Poor Quality & Design of Phase 3 Must Not Be Repeated

Residents have serious concerns about the design and quality of the new proposals, especially given the unacceptable outcomes of Phase 3:

- **Poor Architectural Quality being too dense:** The buildings in Phase 3 are bland, and over densified, and lack character, creating an uninspiring and sterile environment that fails to reflect the original vision of Woodberry Down. The density is too intense and from an architectural perspective looks cruel.
- **Unsafe & Unfriendly Public Spaces:** The new designs prioritise density over livability, resulting in dark, overshadowed courtyards, limited communal areas, and a lack of inviting spaces for residents to gather.

Residents do not want a repeat of Phase 3's low-quality, high-density, visually unappealing development. The mistakes made there should be acknowledged and rectified in the design of Phases 5 to 8.

Request: A public design review of the masterplan must be conducted with input from residents, ensuring that the new buildings avoid the mistakes of Phase 3 and deliver high-quality, attractive homes and not being over impactful with the density.

5. Environmental Impact & Green Space Reduction

While the masterplan includes some green space provisions, increasing density raises several environmental concerns:

- **Loss of Open Space:** Additional homes will place greater pressure on public parks and green areas, which are already at risk of overuse.
- **Air & Noise Pollution:** More residents and vehicle movements will increase emissions, affecting air quality and worsening noise pollution.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** High-rise buildings and increased density will trap heat, making the environment uncomfortable for residents, particularly in summer months.
- **WindTunnel affect?????**

Request: A comprehensive environmental impact assessment must be conducted, with a commitment to expand rather than reduce green space provision.