

Woodberry Down Regeneration: a briefing for the Mayor

Submitted On behalf of the Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO) ahead of the board meeting, 19th of March 2026

We are grateful that the Mayor has chosen to join us, and wish to make the best use of her time. This note sets out the questions and issues on which we would most value her perspective. We are not looking for prepared answers – an honest conversation will be of far more value to us than a presentation.

The regeneration has delivered real and tangible benefits: thousands of new and improved homes, transformed public spaces, and a mixed community that Woodberry Down did not have before. There are very many of us who thoroughly enjoy living here. That achievement is not in question. But the partnership's own risk register, which currently shows every major risk rated amber or red, tells us that we are at a critical and fragile moment, and we think it is important that the Mayor hears that directly from residents.

1. Viability – the elephant in the room

Recent calculations show Phase 6 as currently not viable. Phase 4 has now passed its post-planning viability test; Phase 5 has not yet entered the planning process. This is not a temporary blip. The London flat market is in structural difficulty: recent analysis by Hamptons shows that 22% of London flat sellers in 2025 sold at a loss. Flat prices across London have fallen more than 7% since early 2023 in real terms.

This matters because the regeneration's cross-subsidy model depends on the sale of private and shared-ownership homes generating the surplus that makes the social housing viable. If that market does not recover, the financial case for Phases 6 through 8 is in doubt. We would like to understand how committed the Council is to completing the full regeneration, and what contingency planning is underway if fears about the market prove real.

Related risk: Building Safety Regulations. The approval process for plans is experiencing significant delays, with a direct knock-on effect on the timeline for decanting Phase 5 residents. Phase 4 will not be ready when Phase 5 demolition begins; residents may face a double decant. They deserve to know what the realistic timeline now looks like.

2. The affordability gap

The new private homes on the estate are generating substantial amounts of Council Tax. The demographics of those new households make relatively light demands on Council services compared to the social housing population they have joined. At the same time, rents and service

charges in the social sector are rising in ways that are genuinely difficult for many residents to manage. A recent national survey found that nearly eight in ten people were cutting back on food and drink spending outside the home because of financial pressure. Woodberry Down is not immune to this.

We would ask what specific policies, funding mechanisms, or interventions the Council is considering to address this widening gap – and whether the Council Tax yield from Woodberry Down creates any scope to invest directly back into the community that generated it.

3. The local picture – what residents see

Block D – the community space

WDCO secured a commitment to a dedicated community space in Block D nearly a decade ago. It remains empty and has not yet been handed over by Berkeley Homes to the Council. This is itself recorded on the partnership risk register. It is a source of considerable frustration. We very much wish to see this brought to a conclusion.

Social infrastructure – the Naturalist and beyond

The Naturalist pub has recently closed. Our remaining food and beverage outlets are under financial pressure. The estate is growing rapidly but its social infrastructure is not keeping pace. WDCO has responded by establishing a Culture Club pilot to help build community cohesion, but this cannot substitute for permanent social venues.

Public space and service charges

New publicly accessible routes – will shortly be joined by the West Reservoir walkway – are bringing significant footfall through spaces maintained from residents' service charges. There is an unresolved question about who pays for public benefits that the whole borough enjoys. We need the Council's help in establishing a fair framework.

Ageing stock and maintenance

Some of the earliest social housing completed in the regeneration is already showing signs of wear notably in the lifts. We are collaborating with Notting Hill Genesis over the long-term maintenance strategy.

Young people and anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour remains a concern. The estate's school sits effectively unused outside school hours. Given the Council's strong Council Tax income from Woodberry Down, we would ask whether expanded use of the school for after-school and evening activities for young people could be supported – a modest investment with potentially significant community benefit.

The Redmond Community Centre

The Redmond is the estate's only community hub. Manor House Development Trust, the charity that holds the licence for the Redmond, is currently operating through a management agreement with The London Development Trust, with limited independent governance capacity. WDCO believes the Redmond deserves a community anchor organisation that is genuinely fit for purpose, and would welcome the Council's active

support in achieving that as the lease on the Redmond Centre approaches its end and the initial tranche of council funding for MHDT has ceased. A strong and effective MHDT is essential to a strong and effective Woodberry Down.

4. The political context

The partnership risk register also identifies political risk from the forthcoming local elections. We note that risk, and we note it in the context of communications with residents – itself rated as a persistent risk to the project despite the existence of a formal communication strategy. WDCO's view is that the best antidote to political risk is demonstrated commitment and honest communication. A public reaffirmation from the Mayor of the Council's intention to see the regeneration through to completion – across all phases – would be of genuine value to the community, whatever the electoral landscape.

This note was prepared by the chair on behalf of the WDCO board and reflects input from executive members. We are happy to discuss any of these points in more detail before or after the meeting. Contact: [Adrian Essex, Chair, WDCO – Omotng@gmail.com, 0797 0705411]