

Sustainable Communities - Qualitative householder research findings from South Cambridgeshire and Barking and Dagenham

This report is part of the evidence-base for the full report: 'Sustainable communities: a review of Government progress' by the Sustainable Development Commission.

INTRODUCTION

"Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all." (Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity, ODPM's Five year plan, 2005).

This qualitative householder research was carried out to complement the Area-Based Assessments undertaken on behalf of the Sustainable Development Commission, as part of its wider review of the Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP). It was undertaken in Barking and Dagenham, and South Cambridgeshire. This report is based on the transcripts of interviews undertaken in these areas.

The aim of the research was to seek householders' opinions of their communities. The developments visited were built after the launch of the Sustainable Community Plan, although planning permission for the developments pre-dated it. This is the context in which the views expressed should be used.

The developments we visited broke down into two main geographical areas and development types – greenfield and infill.

Developments characterised as greenfield sites: South Cambridgeshire

Interviews were undertaken in two developments in South Cambridgeshire: Cambourne and The Quills. Both are built on the outskirts of existing communities, i.e. they are not physically integrated into the nearby developments. The term 'greenfield' is used in this report to describe these sites.

South Cambridgeshire is within the 'The London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough' area designated by government as one of four Growth Areas in the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan and is considered to have potential for significant housing and employment growth. Communities and Local Government (CLG) state that the area runs from the north east in London to the city of Peterborough.

Cambourne is a new town about twelve miles west of Cambridge comprising three villages: Great Cambourne, and the smaller Lower Cambourne and Upper Cambourne. Construction of the development began in 1998 on what was previously farmland; the final population is expected to be around 10,000.

The Quills is situated on the outskirts of the village of Girton, which is located just over 2 miles north west of Cambridge City Centre. Once the development is complete there will be around 270 homes, currently 100 homes have been built, of which 30% are affordable housing.

Developments characterised as infill housing: Barking and Dagenham

Interviews were undertaken in three developments in Barking and Dagenham: St Ann's, Beringer's Place, and Robert's Place. The developments are integrated with existing developments. The term 'infill' is used in this report to describe them.

The Thames Gateway is identified as one of England's growth areas in the Sustainable Communities Plan. In contrast to the developments where the interviews were undertaken, most of the planned housing development will happen on key large scale development sites.

St Ann's is part of the larger Gascoigne estate, close to Barking town centre. The new flats were built in place of older high rise council flats and comprise of separate blocks for private, shared ownership and rented affordable. There are 125 one and two bedroom flats, together with access road and parking - 75 out of the total 125 are affordable.

Beringer's Place is built on the site of an old school. It is situated at the end of a small suburban street in Barking, about a 10 minute walk from Becontree tube station. There are 28 four-bedroom houses which are affordable housing and 80 two-bedroom flats, although not all of these are currently occupied - 38 out of the total 108 properties are affordable

Robert's Place is close to the centre of Dagenham and 10 minutes from Dagenham East station. The 84 properties are a range of sizes. The place is advertised as undergoing a major regeneration project, "so be the first to get on the climbing housing market in Dagenham". Thirty-six out of the 84 are affordable.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 15 in-depth interviews (per area) were conducted at respondents' homes, lasting two hours each. Residents were recruited beforehand to ensure that a range of demographic backgrounds was included in the sample. Pre-interview diaries were prepared by the residents to help them think about the issues in advance. The last half hour of the interview was dedicated to an accompanied tour of the community with the respondents.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, a number of short doorstep/street interviews were conducted with neighbouring residents around the Barking and Dagenham developments to gauge their reaction to the developments.

Sample

The sample was as follows:

South Cambridgeshire

Location	Sex	Lifestage	Car	Housing type	Ethnicity
Cambourne	M	Pre-family couple	Yes	Private	White
Cambourne	F	Younger family; single	Yes	Affordable Rent	White
Cambourne	F	Younger family; single	Yes	Affordable Rent	White
Cambourne	F	Older family; couple	Yes	Affordable Part rent/part bought	White
The Quills	M	Pre family; single	No	Private Rent	White (Polish)

The Quills	F	Pre family; couple	Yes	Private	Asian British
The Quills	F	Older family; couple	Yes	Affordable	White

Barking and Dagenham

Location	Sex	Lifestage	Car	Housing type	Ethnicity
St Ann's	F	Younger family; couple	No	Affordable Rent	White
St Ann's	M	Pre family; single	No	Affordable Shared Ownership	White
Beringer's Place	F	Younger family; single	Yes	Affordable Rent	White
Beringer's Place	F	Older family: single	Yes	Affordable Rent	White
Robert's Place	F	Pre family; single	Yes	Private	White
Robert's Place	M	Pre family; single	No	Affordable Rent	Black African
Driberg Court	F	Empty nester; single	No	Affordable Rent	White

FINDINGS

1. The environmental sensitivity of the developments

According to government policy, sustainable communities should be environmentally-sensitive. In particular, government is keen that sustainable communities should: protect the environment; create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods; and minimise waste.

The interviews covered issues such as home insulation; the use of renewable or efficient energy sources such as microgeneration, solar panels, CHP and community-owned wind turbines; availability of local recycling schemes including doorstep recycling collection; access and use of green spaces; play space provision; and the availability of allotments.

Householders responses implied that progress towards government aspirations in the developments was patchy or poor. Although some facilities and services - such as recycling and water meters – were reasonably good (and in some cases very good), many were absent, inadequate, or only available for certain members of the community.

GREENER LIVING: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

Cambourne was built as a self-contained sustainable community and there had been noticeable efforts to achieve this through home efficiency (solar panels and photovoltaic tiles on dedicated 'eco-homes'), open spaces (nature reserves, allotments, orchard, woodlands) and recycling. Residents commented on the benefits of this provision, as well as the problems where facilities weren't

comprehensive or properly thought through. For example, in one house, a water butt was promised but could not be installed as it would obstruct a window.

Both The Quills and Cambourne developments have water meters installed in the homes.

"We have a water meter but we don't pay for water, it's all included in the rent. There aren't any solar panels or anything. I don't know how environmentally friendly the development is." M, Pre-family flat sharing, renting private flat, The Quills, Cambridge

The meters were usually outside the respondent's home but there was no sign that the meters were changing habits.

Both Cambourne and The Quills had good recycling facilities, with black bins for general rubbish as well as separate bins for glass, newspaper and compost.

"Anything I can, I recycle, apart from the plastic. I don't tend to go that way into the village." F, mother with partner, affordable, The Quills, Cambridge

GREENER LIVING: Barking and Dagenham infill

Householders in the three developments in Barking and Dagenham remarked on how well insulated their homes were.

"It's lovely in the winter. I haven't turned my heating on since I moved in here!" F, mother with partner, St Ann's, Barking

Natural lighting was less well provided for:

"The thing I don't like about my flat is that it doesn't get a lot of light so I have always got my lights on" F, mother with partner, St Ann's, Barking

One interviewee commented that his lights were unable to take energy efficient light bulbs:

"I've got 3 halogens in my kitchen and I can't fit energy efficient because the fitting won't take it but where I can I've got energy efficient" M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

In Barking and Dagenham there was variation in the levels of recycling. The St Ann's development had orange bins for recycling all materials (except glass) as well as black bins for general waste. A similar scheme was implemented in Beringer's place although this was not as successful:

"The council did a big thing about recycling and gave us orange bags. We put them out the front and they never got collected and mine was there for over a week. And you got letters saying please do not leave rubbish outside your house so people think now 'you know what forget it' everything goes in the black bag" Single mother, Beringer's Place, Barking

"There are communal bins but not allowed to use them as they are for the private residents" Single mother, affordable, Beringer's Place, Barking

At Roberts Place there were recycling facilities but respondents living there were not aware of them or how they worked.

2. The economic and social benefits of the developments

Government specifies that sustainable communities should be active, inclusive and safe; well-designed and built; well-connected; well-served; and thriving.

We were looking for answers to questions such as - do householders feel the developments are well-built, comfortable and safe? Do people have access to high quality public services such as shops, schools, public transport and leisure facilities? Is there social cohesion within the community, and how well does the development address issues of affordability and private ownership?

HOMES: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt AND Barking and Dagenham infill

Across all developments, respondents were generally happy with the size and layout of the interior of their homes:

"The specifications are really quite good here" M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

"How could I say no to this place - it's lovely, it's big, there's room." Single mother, affordable, Beringer's Place, Barking

The layouts of the homes were felt to be well conceived and suitable to residents' daily needs:

"I like the way the flat is set out as the kitchen is in the front room. This means that I can keep an eye on my child while I'm cooking" Mother with partner, St Ann's, Barking

Architecturally, the designs were not always appreciated:

"These are very mediocre designs compared to the city itself" F, married, The Quills, private, Cambridge

There were levels of dissatisfaction over housing design and density in Cambourne and The Quills compared to Barking and Dagenham (where, presumably, high housing density is expected):

"When I go upstairs, all I see are other people's bedrooms" F, married, The Quills, private, Cambridge

Whilst respondents appreciated the general specifications of the homes, nearly all had experienced problems with their new homes in terms of delivery from the developers.

"It's full of good things apart from the teething troubles you get with new homes, and depending on how good your builder is at putting them right, which (my developers) aren't very good at putting right."

Mother with partner, affordable, The Quills, Cambridge

"One of the windows are broken but they've used the wrong brackets; they're not the right strength so they'll continually break which is why they [the housing association] have not covered them in the insurance... They've used a lot of cheap materials"

Single mother, affordable, Beringer's Place, Barking

In Beringer's place affordable housing gardens were often waterlogged, as the gardens were not set up properly.

In both private and affordable housing, in both regions, respondents felt that houses had been built using poor quality materials. People felt that developers had left jobs uncompleted and were happy to get the developments delivered as quickly and cheaply as possible. Sometimes the problems were dealt with swiftly, other times it could be a more laborious experience, with respondents having to go back and forth communicating with various administrative bodies, such as the local authority.

SECURITY: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

The Quills was perceived by residents to be safe and there were mixed opinions about Cambourne.

"This area is not for teenagers going out at night, if they are coming back from the city they take a taxi, they don't come to the estate, what for, to walk in the fields?" M, pre-family sharing, private, The Quills, Cambridge

In Cambourne residents noted various incidents of crime – stolen bicycles, drug dealing, teenage drinking.

"There's not much to do around here - kids are too isolated from a town centre so just hang around in bus shelters" M, pre-family couple, private, Cambourne, Cambridge

The lack of any police presence is a concern for residents as it can take 20 minutes for them to come from Cambridge. Residents are waiting for a police station that will be part of the broader development.

SECURITY: Barking and Dagenham infill

Opinions over safety were equally mixed in the Barking and Dagenham development. Respondents felt safe and secure within their flats and houses, but those with young children and single females could feel threatened in the more general area

"When I get to the station, I call a cab even though it only takes me a couple of minutes to walk home. It's worth the money to get home safe." F, pre-family single, Robert's Place, Dagenham

Other respondents did not have this same fear now that they had settled in:

"I was warned off moving here but the trouble was painted in a disproportionate picture" M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

AMENITIES: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

Respondents living in Cambourne expressed their frustration at the lack of amenities and infrastructure.

"People have got really annoyed with Cambourne because they've said all these promises, and it's been being built for so many years, and they're not getting anywhere, they're just putting more and more and more houses here, rather than what we need.... They did dupe us [...] lying buggers" Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

"I thought it was going to be like [...] everything you need is going to be here – but everything we don't need is arriving, like the bookies. It would make a very big

difference to living in Cambourne, if there was more to do” Married mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

“It is nothing to how they said it was going to be – where are all the shops, the assortment of shops? [But] we’ve got three bloody estate agents in the same row!” Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

“I’m lucky because I can drive. If you didn’t drive I’d think you’d get a bit fed up [living here]” F, Cambourne, Cambridge

Respondents found it useful to have a supermarket nearby but some would have also liked a mix of smaller shops. They are keen for the pub and sports centre to open which would give people somewhere to meet and teenagers something to do. The only gym is in the hotel, which was felt to be exclusive:

“The hotel facilities is not really for people like me who haven’t got a lot of money” Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

Otherwise, residents welcomed the schools in the area, local doctors and health services. The many walks and green spaces in Cambourne were appreciated by householders, although they were also criticised.

“We don’t have any parks really nearby – it’s quite a walk to get to the parks. When we get there there’s lots of smashed glass in the area, the parks aren’t well maintained” F, Cambourne, Cambridge

The Quills offered little provision in terms of amenities or open spaces.

“There is the grass opposite my house here, you can see when I open the door. There is nothing on this estate. Children used to play here on the small bit of grass, today they put the benches in, now there is no place for children to play.” M, Pre-family flat sharing, renting private flat, The Quills, Cambridge

“I can’t imagine ever just taking off and sitting on one of those benches over there, over the road. I think, why have you put that there. I mean, if it was a nice garden area, and it was shielded, I might think yeah, I’ll go over there and read a book in an afternoon. But not just a bit of grass.” F, mother with partner, affordable, The Quills, Cambridge

“I love green space and enjoy parks, I have not seen one around here.” F, married, The Quills, private, Cambridge

AMENITIES: Barking and Dagenham infill

Infill sites such as those in Barking and Dagenham have the advantage of a functioning infrastructure already in place. Both St Ann’s and Beringer’s had mini-supermarkets and other shops within walking distance as well as leisure centres, shopping centres, restaurants within easy reach. There were several pubs nearby and the good transport links allowed respondents a choice of social life. Those with children felt that the area had a good range of schools too:

“At Jo Richardson School there’s at least four or five things to do every night, ranging from homework clubs to canoeing to rock climbing. It’s a brilliant school - it’s good for (my son)” Single mother, affordable, Beringer’s Place, Barking

Barking has local drama and theatre groups whilst Barking Abbey has community fairs and there are local fun-days. Whilst there were local shops and takeaways within walking distance, respondents with cars did not often use them and most still drove to the local large supermarket for their weekly groceries.

“Amenity-wise I feel quite satisfied. They’re really important because I don’t drive, I’m single and I work long hours – if I didn’t have these facilities on my doorstep it would be really difficult” M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann’s, Barking

There were relatively large parks within walking distance around the Barking and Dagenham developments although some respondents commented that they were too dangerous for children to play on their own.

“In the middle of the estate there are gangs and groups. There’s parks but you can’t take your kids there because of the gangs” Mother with partner, St Ann’s, Barking

In Beringer’s place there was a large communal garden for private residents, which was directly opposite the affordable housing in the development. Residents in affordable housing regretted that their children could not play there. This feeling was heightened when private residents complained of children playing football in the street. There was a strong desire from affordable residents to have some form of communal space even if it wasn’t shared with private residents

“Not everyone complains but it [the layout] does cause problems. All the green area is only for the private residents which is fair enough as they’ve paid for it but the housing association kids are not allowed on the estate at all” Single mother, Beringer’s Place, Barking

TRANSPORT: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

Respondents in Cambourne were heavily reliant on their cars and considered the public transport to be poor:

‘For people that haven’t got a car, it must be so awkward - it must be horrible.’
Married mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

There are bus services but these were felt to be unreliable and inconvenient, The last bus back from Cambridge was about 11pm. The difficulty in parking in Cambridge meant that the bus was sometimes used for shopping trips to the city centre and there was also a park and ride.

There are cycle lanes called red paths, which can be used for people cycling around the development. Towns beyond the development were considered to be too far for travel by bicycle.

The Quills residents also found that the location of the development and lack of infrastructure led them to be heavily reliant on cars:

“After coming here we have had to use it a lot. After 6.30 the bus service is really bad. Before coming here we were completely dependent on public transport. We didn’t use the car at all. Given a choice, we would use the bus.” F, married, The Quills, private, Cambridge

Again the buses and local public transport were not felt to be of a high standard, nor was there much within reasonable walking distance. As Cambridge is a university town there are good cycle links and students on the development could cycle there.

Both Cambourne and The Quills had car parking spaces. Some houses in The Quills had three parking spaces.

TRANSPORT: Barking and Dagenham infill

Respondents were unaware of cycling lanes close to the developments. Some children on the developments did cycle for leisure purposes and there were bike sheds provided at some developments – although they were subject to vandalism.

The residents commented on the good public transport links which we were used for both work and leisure:

“The fact that you’re served with two mainline trains and two tubes I don’t really know why people do drive around here” M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann’s, Barking

For those who had access to a car, this mode of transport was usually preferred over bus or tube as they felt it was still more convenient unless they were going into central London. All of the developments visited had at least one parking space and many houses in Beringer’s place had up to three parking spaces each. Car travel was seen as more convenient for weekly shopping but also for visiting friends and for leisure trips:

“I don’t use public transport. Why not? Because I’ve got a car. My car will always be more convenient” Single mother, affordable, Beringer’s Place, Barking

As well as the inconvenience of public transport the cost was felt to be prohibitive for those with families when using the tube, although the free bus travel for under-16s was much appreciated. The bus links were good and children were able to use them to get to school whilst younger children were driven.

COMMUNITY: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

Residents in Cambourne and The Quills felt there was little sense of community or chance to interact:

‘[We wanted Cambourne to be] like one big family sort of thing – that’s what I wanted – but it’s a bit too big to be one big family!’ Married mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

“No, no, no. I think there is not a community here, because everybody practically are strangers to each other here, because people are busy.” M, pre-family sharing, private, The Quills, Cambridge

“...so you’re far removed from your community, you get up, go to work, come home, and that’s it.” Mother with partner, affordable, The Quills, Cambridge

As well as an overall lack of community cohesion, there was a sense of friction, most obviously between those in private and those in ‘affordable’ housing.

“There can be a split between [affordable and private housing]. There are certain people who have money who don’t want to speak to you... They [the private houses] don’t get affected by the problems going on in the housing association developments. I don’t think they know about the drug dealing” Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

Respondents commented on the distinct architectural design and physical layout of 'affordable' and private houses.

"It's like, that's for them, and that's for us." Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

As well as a private/affordable split, there was a divide between renters and private/shared ownership houses. Renters were felt by some residents to take less care of the community/their property as they do not have a vested interest.

"I think the thing is a lot of people have bought houses as investments and are letting them out, like next door, so that, I don't know that you get that community feel then, because people come and go." Mother with partner, affordable, The Quills, Cambridge

In Cambourne, residents in affordable housing seemed to have more direct relationships with the local community, especially single, non-working mothers who spend a lot of time on the development. Respondents commented, however, that they resented any enforced socialising:

"I don't think shoving everyone together and forcing people works. In my garden we've got chain links between the gardens. You can't have a fence higher than that so you can talk to neighbours but I went and bought panels" Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

COMMUNITY: Barking and Dagenham infill

In general the respondents felt there was a strong sense of community in the area:

"Our community is the six little houses - we're our own neighbourhood watch cum children watch. In that respect we've got a nice little community" Single mother, affordable, Beringer's Place, Barking

"We all practically moved in on the same week. We've built a strong relationship since then... what I like about this block is all the different mix of people" Mother with partner, St Ann's, Barking

We're all in the same boat, it's all new to everyone. If you need anything though, you don't have to be friends with everybody". M pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

However, racial tension was an issue and respondents commented that there was a strong BNP presence in the area. Whilst there was good racial integration within the new build itself with residents from a wide range of backgrounds, there were older developments in the area where there was perceived to be more trouble. The new developments were felt to be an improvement on what went before and there was a hope that they would raise the standards of the local area:

"I'm hoping that new apartments being built that it will bring new blood in to have a more diverse social scene". M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

"The main thing that would improve the community would be for people to behave differently. It's lonely here being a white person. The blacks keep themselves to themselves." F, pre-family single, Robert's Place, Dagenham

The divide between private and 'affordable' residents found in the greenfield sites, was also present in the Barking and Dagenham developments. Again, the difference in housing design and services was seen as a main cause. Private residents, for example, had their own communal bins (affordable houses had none), a gated park and CCTV. There were separate entrances for private and affordable:

"They tend to look down their noses [at us] - they say we're paying all this money to live here and it's all your kids out playing. I sympathize with them but at the same time what did they expect - they knew these houses were built before the flats".
Single mother, Beringer's Place, Barking

There was a noticeable absence of these divisions in the St Ann's development. The architecture of the private, shared and affordable blocks is identical and they were clearly all part of the same development, with the layout not explicitly dividing them.

"I think it's quite clever with these apartments as they've made one lot shared ownership, one for outright sale, one lot for council" M pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

Like Cambourne, people resented enforced socialising through low fencing:

"I don't get along with one of my neighbours because her child hurt mine with a mop handle because of how low the fences are - I'm looking into getting it made higher - but otherwise we all get along" Mother with partner, St Ann's, Barking

3. Good governance

The government set out to create communities that are well run and fair for everyone. This means that communities should *"enjoy representative, accountable governance systems; have effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level; and have recognition of individuals' rights and responsibilities."* (Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity, ODPM's Five year plan, 2005).

Householders were asked if the area had lived up to their expectations, and the extent to which they are engaged over future developments in the community.

EXPECTATIONS: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

The Cambourne residents were in many cases disappointed with the area. The community had been marketed as a 'a lovely quiet little village' in radio ads. Several of the residents we interviewed did not feel that this is what they got:

"We thought it was going to be like a little country village, nice for the kids to grow up - when we moved it was half the size it is now - and it was in the paper the other day that they're planning to make it three times the size it is now. So it's going to be like another big town" Married mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

"There's other parts I've seen where they've just crammed in so many houses and flats and stuff that nobody gets privacy, 'cause everyone's looking in each other's gardens and houses." Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

A sense of community was not the only reason people moved to Cambourne, other motives were financial. Private buyers thought their property would be a good investment as a first step on the housing market ladder, and there was some evidence that they may have been unhappy with the outcomes:

"I'm glad I don't own my house privately. One house has been bought and sold three times in a year so obviously not that happy. People don't know this is housing association. There's a lot of property that people have bought for investment and are just renting them out". Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

For affordable home owners, a key reason that residents took the offer was the opportunity of getting a new home, one that would be a big improvement on their previous accommodation.

Unlike Cambourne, The Quills was not promoted to potential home-owners as a 'community'. Rather, respondents' motives for moving to The Quills had been as a stepping-stone towards their 'dream home'.

"I would not think of living here for a long time." F, married, The Quills, private, Cambridge

EXPECTATIONS: Barking and Dagenham

In Barking and Dagenham, residents' motivation for moving to the area was not necessarily because of the community, but because of their desire to get on to the property ladder at a reasonable price.

"I want to stay here for a couple of years, make up the equity on it and move to a nicer area." Tina, pre-family single, Robert's Place, Dagenham

"It's far exceeded my expectations – it's allowed me to get a foot on the housing ladder." M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann's, Barking

This was also true, if not more so, for those in shared ownership as the opportunity given to them through sharing a mortgage with a Housing Association was the only way they could afford a property.

However there was some disappointment with the reality of their situation

"You get kids playing on the grass at the front where it says 'No ball games'. It worries me because when I go to sell this, it's going to affect the price I get. I think if I'd known about all this I probably wouldn't have bought it." F, pre-family single, Robert's Place, Dagenham

ENGAGEMENT: South Cambridgeshire greenbelt

In both Cambourne and The Quills, the respondents did not feel engaged in the future development of the area. We found people frustrated by their lack of influence over decisions.

Although there are some consultation practices in place in Cambourne, these were not felt to be effective.

"It's just them telling you things, there's no opportunity for you to have your say." Married mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

"All you've got is a sign saying site reserved for Police Station – date unknown." Single mother, affordable, Cambourne, Cambridge

Likewise at The Quills, residents felt they had little say in the development of the area and were frustrated by some of the 'improvements' to the housing over which they had little influence.

ENGAGEMENT: Barking and Dagenham infill

The respondents noted some limited evidence of attempts to engage people in future developments in the area:

“We also had a letter about new apartments coming up and Barking & Dagenham council wrote to us and said we could write to them if we had any concerns” M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann’s, Barking

Existing residents surrounding the Beringer’s place were also told about the development.

Several people we interviewed expressed their interest in having more engagement:

“I’m thinking of setting up a residents association so that we have a communal voice. At the moment it’s one person ringing up Southern Housing and they’re not getting a bigger picture. For example we do have an issue with litter – if we had a clear direction forward. Southern housing said they would give me their full backing.” M, pre-family single, affordable, St Ann’s, Barking

“When I moved in there was a form I had to fill in, asking whether I wanted to be secretary or treasurer or chair or on a committee or something, and I put my name down, I’m quite happy to do something with the neighbours and stuff, but I didn’t hear anything from it.” F, pre-family single, Robert’s Place, Dagenham