

Listening as a Methodology, Longevity as a Goal: London's Tustin Estate Master Plan as a Case Study for Community-Led Design Development

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ABSTRACT - *This essay explores the relationship between a group of design professionals, a community of residents, and a local council in the early stages of the Tustin Estate renewal project – a Master Plan and Phase One Regeneration for a south-east London post-war housing estate. In 2021, the estate's residents voted in favor of demolishing and rebuilding its low-rise buildings in a residents' ballot. This essay positions Tustin Estate's engagement phase as a notable case study for community-led design, providing an overview of London's introduction of resident ballots in estate development, leading onto the example of Tustin Estate's ballot, which initiated its engagement strategy. Interviews with key members of the engagement process form the central research to this essay, which explores the role of ballots in estate regeneration; approaches to building authentic engagement; the importance of community ownership; and how listening enables knowledge transfer and creates a blueprint for longevity. The essay defines longevity as the culmination of design and build solutions based on principles drawn directly from residents' needs, each of which being robust enough to avoid demolition for the long-term.*

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Similarly to many of the world's metropolises, London's right to housing is weighted with matters of demographics, equalities, land availability, population growth, environment, and affordability. In his *Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration*, which was launched under the heading of "Better Homes for Local People" in 2018, the Mayor of London pointed

to the shortfall in housing provision in his foreword, describing how “the capital’s jobs and population have grown substantially but new affordable housing has failed to keep pace.”¹ Years later, this condition has been exacerbated by the economic, social and urban recovery from a global pandemic and by a growing cost-of-living crisis. Compounded by the fact that in the last twenty years the number of houses has only increased by 18 % whilst the population has increased by 27 %, ² the right to housing in the UK’s capital has become a more and more elusive concept. The problem of quantity is linked with one of quality, with the standards of housing stock also having an impact on the right to adequate housing.

The independent charity World Habitat describes community-led housing as an undertaking where local people play “a leading and lasting role in solving local housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities in ways that are difficult to achieve through mainstream housing.”³ The notion of communities sharing crucial design decision-making with the typical powers who usually take charge of estate making came to the fore on a project in south-east London, known as the Tustin Estate, which began in 2020 and formed part of a wider regeneration program. The Tustin Estate currently includes 468 homes in three towers and six low rise blocks, the Pilgrims Way Primary School, and a selection of local businesses. It was selected for a feasibility exploration in 2019, with a view to address the bad state of repair of the homes on the estate. In February 2021, a ballot saw existing estate residents voting in favor of redevelopment. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1. Tustin Estate public engagement event.

The original Tustin Estate was completed in 1969 and now forms part of London's Old Kent Road Area Action Plan, which was initiated through informal community consultation in 2015, and most recently updated in 2020. This document sets a minimum target of building 20,000 new homes within the Old Kent Road catchment. The Tustin Estate also forms part of Southwark's Great Estates program, which aims to ensure that each of the borough's estates are clean, safe, and cared for, and that residents are kept firmly at the heart of decision-making in development.

In September 2021, London and Berlin based architects dRMM, together with Adam Khan Architects, JA Projects and Exterior Architecture were selected by competition to take forward the design for the master plan and first buildings for the Tustin Estate regeneration, which was approved through a hybrid planning application soon after in July 2022. The ballot vote had already followed a ten-month long community-led design feasibility exploration,⁴ but a new engagement phase was initiated to explore design possibilities and solutions for the master plan, design code, and for the detailed first phase of the project, ensuring the voice of the community continued to be heard throughout the evolution of the design.⁵

The Tustin Estate community members became protagonists in developing an engagement model built on a faceted methodology of listening – a format of collaborative thinking and co-designing with the potential to act as a blueprint for longevity in different models of housing design. That engagement model and its varied events is what is being explored here. The engagement model links to Tustin's regeneration master plan and design code, which covers the entire estate, with the exception of the existing towers. The first phase was spread across three sites on the estate and included 167 new homes for existing residents. Aside from its built elements, the project's landscape strategy is integral to the overall design, comprising the enhancement and enlargement of public area, retention of existing mature trees and addition of new trees within the grounds. The regeneration scheme in its entirety will eventually provide 690 homes, comprising 68 % affordable homes made up of council rent, shared equity, key worker accommodation and homes for over fifty-fives. Homes for private sale will be included as a strategy to raise funds for council housing, departing from more typical paradigms in which homes for private sale capitalize on land value rather than enable social housing. (Fig. 2)

Housing provides individuals and families with security and dignity, and in this respect, it is the backbone of social cohesion. Yet, despite its bearing on people's health and well-being, social momentum and livelihood, the right to adequate housing was only enshrined in human rights laws by the United Nations in the middle of the twentieth century.⁶ The timeline on making good the right to housing therefore demands acceleration, and when pitted against the multifarious challenges of a modern world, is demonstrably lagging. For this reason, the challenge for architects, landscape architects, urbanists, and other allied design disciplines in this decade is twofold. The first is to

form part of a coalition that must address the right to housing; this means championing collaboration and a re-ordering of power hierarchies at play in the process of designing and delivering residential architecture. The second is unlocking solutions for housing that go beyond what is adequate, and instead working in pursuit of that which is optimal, or even aspirational. This means finding ways to design housing that is right for the people of any given place – in both quantity and quality.



Figure 2. Axonometric showing the Tustin Estate Master Plan which extends the public realm at the heart of the site.

STANDARDS OF ENGAGEMENT: VARIATIONS IN LOCAL PRACTICE

As with many population-wide challenges, delivering housing brings about complexities that are often both contradictory and mutually-reinforcing. Arguably, the most intricate part of tackling the right to housing is reconciling the needs of the varied stakeholders, participants and invested parties that bring their voice to the story of its development. Ensuring all these voices are heard demands a listening approach that is multi-faceted and layered.

Processes of community engagement present an immediate means by which to address this gap in reconciliation. Yet these processes rely on a multitude of factors working together to achieve even just baseline standards of engagement, much less more stratified, diverse facets of community driven listening. In the UK, there is no national prerequisite model for engagement activity pre-planning. Instead, developments that

are council led rely on the disparate, localized guidelines attached to their respective catchment.

In the UK, councils are part of what makes up the structure of local government. In most of England, they exist as one of two tiers of subdivision – county and district. In London and other metropolitan areas specifically, councils operate under a single tier structure and are responsible for all services in their area. In London exclusively, councils provide nearly all public services to their area of authority, with the Greater London Authority (GLA) providing city-wide government.⁷ Therefore, uniformity across geography in terms of pre-planning engagement is difficult to achieve, and levels of engagement with communities ahead of redevelopment or regeneration projects subsequently rest on individual councils' engagement methods with residents and stakeholders. This is also true to the designers who are eventually charged with bringing the project to life – investment in engagement without formal precondition for its delivery depends largely on the disposition of all the parties involved in the development.

In the absence of an overarching national engagement policy, and by its very nature as an endeavor that relies on human dialogue and exchange, community consultation in housing development is a constantly evolving process. In the UK, it varies across its constituent countries of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, where dynamics of planning and engagement may differ. Broadly, however, planning schemes across the UK are similar: each has a “plan-led system,” where local authorities produce development plans that set out planning policies.⁸ In tandem, the primary means by which planners are able to listen to the views of community is through the process of consultation.⁹

In 2021, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) highlighted important biases in consultation processes within their response to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee's inquiry on “meeting the UK's Housing Demand,”¹⁰ pointing to the discrepancy between older and younger generations and how much more likely the former is to become involved in the planning process. The response highlighted their different levels of free time, experience, and income, and how this impacts decisions on new development, which in turn could contribute to a shortage of affordable housing. This is only one of the complexities involved with consultation and engagement activities, yet outlines how much of a nuanced, evolving exercise community consultation is. Overall, it is an endeavor that requires a nimble approach as much as it does a holistic one.

In a report published in 2021, The Glass-House – which is a national charity dedicated to enabling people and organizations to work collaboratively to improve the design of their buildings, open spaces, homes, and neighborhoods¹¹ – noted that the UK's Ministry of Housing, Communities

and Local Government (MHCLG) had “set out some commendable ambitions in their National Model Design Code, which aims to help authorities around the country raise and maintain high standards of design through the implementation of localized design codes to inform planning and development.”¹² Yet, when consulted specifically on matters of community engagement whilst the design code was being drafted, The Glass-House expressed “considerable concern over how effective community engagement could work in practice, when there was still a skills and resource gap in this area within the national landscape.”¹³

As such, many engagement practices have been moving towards a system of co-designing, which is defined as a creative approach that brings together experiences from real life scenarios, drawing on the views and skills of diverse perspectives to address a specific problem.¹⁴ In an essay on using co-designing as a method to achieve wider Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and inclusive urban planning, a “well-planned co-design process and engagement strategy” is described as supporting “inclusive participation and social learning through enabling knowledge, dialogue, learning, and equity in urban and territorial planning processes.”¹⁵ Tustin’s methodology of listening incorporates and aligns with co-design approaches, positioning co-design as having strong potential to build joint innovation between designer and resident during the design process.

The wider system of engagement will likely never be perfect, but the desire to bridge its gaps collides with a newfound cognizance that housing design in this decade, and beyond, will be defined by a different set of parameters and needs. Not least because of the impact of a global health pandemic that forced people indoors and into a closer examination of the physicality – and associated limitations – of their homes. The right to housing in this context reaches outside the human right to shelter and comfort and must address a new requirement for protection, extending past the threat of a singular disease or emergency. Today, homes are required to do more – to protect people’s physical health, mental well-being, social equity, and environmental stability.

BEGINNING WITH PEOPLE: RESIDENT BALLOTS IN ESTATE REGENERATION

In regeneration of housing, such considerations should begin from the viewpoint of the resident. In London, from July 2018, this viewpoint was mandated by a new balloting system that specifically referred to housing estate regeneration. It instructed that any landlord seeking funding from the GLA for estate regeneration projects involving the demolition of social homes needed to demonstrate resident support through a balloted voting system. Funding from the GLA would therefore only support estate regeneration projects if there was resident buy-in for major development decisions at inception.¹⁶

This new requirement can be seen as a micro-transfer of power in the trajectory of housing rights back to the capital's residents. The GLA ballot requirement only applies to estate regeneration plans that comprise the delivery of 150 or more homes,¹⁷ which means estates with fewer homes do not use ballot voting. There are also instances where landlords can seek exemptions to the ballot system. Broadly, however, the voting process does help to place the resident as the gatekeeper to the range of interventions that can be undertaken on social housing estates regeneration projects – from refurbishment and intensification to demolition and rebuilding.¹⁸

The balloting system adds a layer of formality to pre-planning discussions with communities and is a system that – like other formats of listening – should be considered for replication beyond council-led estate regeneration. Because whilst local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage, they have no authority to require a developer to engage with them before submitting a planning application.¹⁹ The value of the ballot system's decision-making power lies in its ability to have a ripple effect on the wider progression of the city's housing delivery. It posits that the arbitrators who are best placed to make fundamental decisions on the trajectory of estate regeneration are the people that live there.

The outcome of social housing regeneration impacts thousands of Londoners; but it goes beyond the footprint of individual estates. The composition and fabric of London exists as a multi-tenured tapestry of housing provision, where improvements and benefits to social housing impact the quality of whole neighborhoods, which, in turn, impact the opportunities and social success of individual boroughs, and which should, in theory, strengthen the city as a whole.

BUILDING AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT: TUSTIN ESTATE, SOUTHWARK, LONDON

A ballot vote organized in February 2021 characterized an important decision point in the consultation phase of the Tustin Estate regeneration, and followed an options survey, where residents voted on a number of outcomes for the future of the estate. Yet the estate's engagement process reaches further backwards and was borne from a wider, growing awareness of how Southwark Council might improve its engagement practices.

This scope of awareness included the 2018-2022 Southwark Council Plan, which set out a roadmap to the council's continued work with local communities, augmenting a commitment to "put residents first." Tustin's options development process started in 2019 and included in-depth equality impact assessments from the outset. In May 2020, the council launched a program titled "Southwark Stands Together," which was instigated as a response to the inequalities exposed by the Black Lives Matter protests, the pandemic, and the subsequent events of 2020.²⁰ The principles of that program were incorporated into Tustin's ongoing delivery.

In general, the Tustin Estate regeneration master plan was required to follow Southwark Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – an important planning document that defines “how and when local residents, community groups and stakeholders can be involved in the planning process; [...] when [the council] consults on planning applications for new development.”²¹ Catherine Brownell, Program Manager for Sustainable Growth, North, in the Chief Executive's department at Southwark Council, describes Tustin's feasibility community engagement process as a flagship consultation project for the council. “The council sought to engage on a number of fronts, and so recognized that it could do things better – to look at how we consult with our residents, try and develop even stronger consultation processes.”²²

The Tustin community was asked to put their voices to ballot on the question: “Are you in favor of the proposal for the redevelopment of the low-rise homes on the Tustin Estate?” They demonstrated an 87 % majority “yes” vote, agreeing to demolition and rebuilding of the estate's low-rise buildings. Many of the residents voting in the ballot had lived on the estate their entire lives – their grandparents and parents lived there, and their children attended school on the estate at the Pilgrims Way Primary School. In so doing, they had vocalized their right to housing, only with a caveat that that right would be best served if parts of the estate were demolished and redesigned.

Earlier in 2019, a Residents' Manifesto was written by the residents to outline a set of requirements from the people living on the estate. This then informed the development of the Landlord Offer, which was put to residents at the ballot in February 2021. Brownell explains how “[Tustin] residents were involved at the very start, when we were talking to them about what options were available for the estate and why the estate was needing options – because the buildings are at the end of their service life. They were involved in the selection of the feasibility study architects, and indeed before that, in the actual development of the brief. They were involved right from the beginning insofar as they wrote a manifesto.”

The manifesto came together as a document comprised of a set of must-haves whose design-focused elements would eventually contribute to a formal design code. The manifesto would go on to guide all future development on the estate and impact a range of elements including local lettings policy and offers to leaseholders. In the manifesto, residents articulated their desire for “the estate to be improved, to be a better place to live with a strong sense of community, throughout the regeneration process and into the future.” As a community, they laid out their needs lucidly and comprehensively, from logistical matters of rent, service charge, moving, loss and disturbance assistance, to organizational requirements linked to sizes of homes, density mix, clustering, age-friendly provision, and finally insurance necessities around re-housing and shared equity options.²³

The council was able to work directly with the community on the manifesto and submitted a response to each point made by residents therein. Brownell describes the residents' list of requirements as the council's "starting point for the [regeneration's] brief." Ultimately, the composition of directives listed in the Residents' Manifesto points to the central question on the right to optimal housing, listing the pragmatic matters that will make housing optimal for living and asking – how can planners, councils, master planners and architects better ensure not only the right to housing, but that housing remains livable and fit for purpose in perpetuity? As such, Brownell observes that Tustin's consultation process, from its earliest stages, held all the components to become a flagship project for engagement – "the council's now taken that as its template of how to do resident engagement on estate regeneration."

Following the ballot, Residents' Manifesto, an eventual formation of the design code, master plan, and Phase One, the design team embarked on a second phase of engagement. In doing so, Tustin Estate's regeneration became a case study for crystallizing the exact needs of a community that had been faced with both old and new challenges tied to their homes – a redevelopment project with the potential to be actively shaped by the needs and desires of its intergenerational community.

TUSTIN ESTATE ENGAGEMENT PLAN: IDENTIFYING PROTAGONISTS OF ENGAGEMENT

The UK's MHCLG makes clear in their guidance an expectation of community involvement in the development of local design codes, including deciding how residents should be engaged.²⁴ The engagement strategy undertaken at Tustin Estate focused on having consistent engagement with established resident groups – which included a Tustin Residents Association, Resident Project Group and Design Subgroup. Understanding how consistency could be kept as a central ingredient to the engagement process contributed to addressing issues of consultation fatigue, ensuring that both the resident community and the design team felt compelled and motivated to feed dialogue at each point of the project's early life stages. To ensure the views of residents helped shape the master plan, the project's design team worked collaboratively with Beyond the Box Consultants, a community interest company that works closely with communities across the UK to ensure inclusivity is made central to new development. Neil Onions, the company's founder and CEO, describes how the team went about curating an engagement process that would work on three overlapping levels. Onions explained how the team's approach to community engagement would be threefold – "if you imagine a Venn diagram, we have community engagement, we have social value and then we have EDI, which is equality, diversity, and inclusion, and at the center of that for us is what we call equity by design. We only feel that people can have real agency in engagement processes if they are invited throughout all these stages."²⁵ (Fig. 3)



Figure 3. Children's activities at the Tustin Estate public engagement event.

It was important for the engagement process to acknowledge the input received from residents to date, ensuring there was continuity without repetition. Therefore, the design team's engagement strategy focused on continually working with established resident networks, gleaning directly from them the best way in which the process of consultation itself could yield meaningful and practically useful outcomes. This method of "asking how to ask" adds dimension to the term co-design, which, as outlined earlier, has become prevalent in language connected with consultation processes.

Onions explains that residents were not only involved in a co-design process but were also central in defining the strategy for engagement, empowering them with agency over how they should be engaged with. He goes on to discuss how, in his company's experience working with communities, the shape and format of the engagement is derived from the counsel of that very community. "When we work with communities we ask

them – what should we be thinking about here? What should we be doing? Real success is working with the community to design your strategy around how they want to be engaged.”

The Tustin Estate Engagement Plan was built on this basis, steered by the design team, the council, and agreed upon with the Tustin Resident Project Group, with an independent Resident Advisor who worked alongside, and supported, the residents throughout.

The plan was updated each month, to ensure that any resident concerns or key topics of interest were being captured. The central role of the Resident Advisor and community plan in capturing community input so it could be fed back to the project team ensured a responsive program, the breadth of which maximized opportunities for listening.

In the first instance, this was dependent on creating conditions for all local people to be aware of the project so as they were enabled to speak their opinion on it. Approaches to disseminating information about the design included posters, leaflets, emails, resident messaging groups, door knocking, and newsletters, providing a variety of approaches to engage all demographics across the estate and its bordering streets. A variety of tailored events including residents' study trips, design workshops, weekly drop-in sessions, coffee mornings, design exhibitions, and a young people's outreach program, all created opportunities for different types of listening.

FACETS OF ENGAGEMENT: DIVERSIFICATION AS A TOOL FOR COLLECTIVE LISTENING

From the project's engagement plan, Tustin's design team gained direct insight into issues and opportunities of the existing estate, as well as a more nuanced understanding of residents' priorities and concerns as they had identified them in their manifesto. These concerns could now be understood in a context of immediate dialogue – a process of dimensional listening in contrast to a “check-listing” exercise. This multi-faceted and regular communication with the estate community meant the designs of the estate's master plan and Phase One plots were developed in parallel and real-time with residents' input; responding and integrating with feedback and keeping all involved informed throughout the process.

The need for feedback was emphasized as a salient component to successful engagement methodologies. Onions explains the importance of feeding back into the community all the insights shared during an engagement plan's listening process. “Our pushback with everybody we work with is, regardless of what you've done with those insights, the feedback loop needs to close. You have to come back and tell people why you did or didn't take on those suggestions.”

Feedback on the Tustin engagement process was returned to the community through varied formats. One of which was a newsletter collated by the council, used to inform residents of key milestones as well as share

a FAQ style update following an exhibition of initial designs, which captured the design team's response to residents' comments.

Yet the idea of a closed feedback loop goes beyond missives and notices that may be missed by sections of communities who are less inclined to follow up or keep adjourned with progress. It also works in partnership with an engagement model's ability to capture moments of intersection between designers and community.

That moment of agreement of understanding can prove evasive to crystalize in practical terms, even when the interlocutors of the listening process hold the community's interests as a leading priority. Questions arise around how engagement process leaders can formulate and seize moments of accord in community engagement. Do digital tools have a part to play in pinning down what might be too organic to record? Does the informal act of conversation leave too much to be lost to the imprecision of manual recording?

On Tustin's engagement process, these moments of intersection were captured during the regular Design Subgroup meetings and Residence Project Group meetings via a "repeat-and-demonstrate" process of relaying back what had been decided at major stakeholder events and then outlining how those decisions would be incorporated into the design in practical terms. This iterative approach was further formalized by attaching specific themes to regular meetings, providing a framework to both community and designer ahead of each gathering as to what element of past agreement was being presented back as a manifestable outcome. This guaranteed not just consistency in terms of recording a process of alignment but offered diversification of interest – if a resident were more inclined to attend a meeting to the theme of "building services" and less to that of "materials," then they were afforded a new degree of control over how they chose to engage with the design process. (Fig. 4)

The idea of multiple, themed meetings therefore rejected the "all-or-nothing" approach that a singular event engagement process might deliver. This approach extended to the series of events and activities that constituted the Tustin Estate Engagement Plan as a whole. In a similar way, a variety of individual events were composed as a means to target different user groups, but also as a methodology for unearthing dialogue that might be stifled by conventional single-event consultation models.

Residents' Walkabout

In the early stages of the Tustin Estate Engagement Plan, residents joined together with the council and the design team to take a walkabout around the estate – in tandem with visiting precedent housing projects to compare design solutions. The walkabout is described by Brownell from Southwark Council as an experience that helped to clearly define roles. "The architect

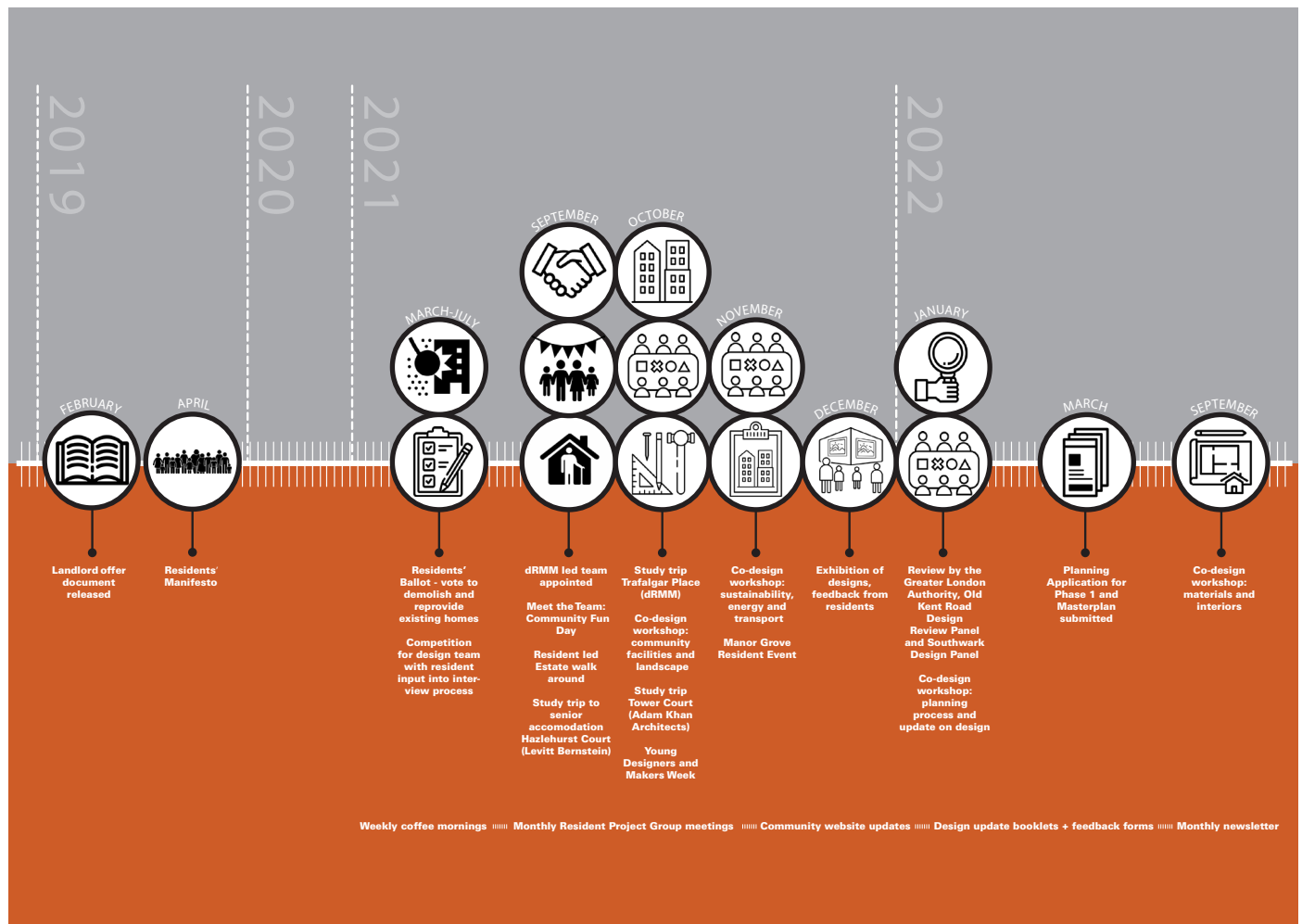


Figure 4. Graphic timeline showing Tustin Estate Engagement Plan events.

knows how to design the building and make it compliant with current building regulations. But the skill is listening and interpreting. And that is where the residents come in – because they will express things in terms of their direct experience, how they do things in their home. It is the architects' job to listen, but to interpret that. That is where the true collaboration is, because you keep in touch with the actual experiential part of being in a building and what matters to people. It is about holding onto all those complexities but knowing how to organize them and prioritize them so that the outcome is right, and you do not get lost in the extreme complexity and difficulty of putting a building together."

The walkabout crystalizes the importance of moving towards an engagement process that is led by the people who will steer and manage a place's success long after designers and consultants have moved on from the process. It also prioritizes a physical connection between listening groups, providing a context where seeing and pointing things out takes over as the main listening format rather than mere verbal discussion confined to a room with no or limited visual props. (Figs. 5, 6)



Figure 5. Exhibited designs at the Tustin Estate public engagement event.



Figure 6. A resident's engagement event. Models of all scales were used as a starting point for dialogue regarding evolving designs.

Initial Design Exhibition

Running across two dates, an exhibition that displayed the initial designs for the Tustin Estate Master Plan was opened to the Tustin community to review and comment on progress. A 1:1 scaled, taped, mark-out of a home, as well as scaled models of typical homes, helped residents achieve tangible understanding of space standards, allowing them to comment on adjacencies and qualities of the homes.

Often community engagement in the built environment can linger on the quality of the public realm or the space around the buildings, this process enables residents to input into the functionality and design quality of their future homes. The exhibition was curated as an informal, open space for sharing commentary, with music and food creating an atmosphere that contextualized the discussion on the emerging proposals within an approachable, familiar setting.

Over-Fifty-Fives' Site Visit

Part of the Tustin Estate regeneration brief was to provide homes for the elder residents of the estate, people who had lived there for the better part of their lives. In a fairly unique approach to housing provision, residents over the age of fifty-five expressed their desire to move into a residential block designed specifically for their sub-community, built to address a desire for a quieter, slow-paced way of life than might be prevalent across the wider expanse of the estate. The over-fifty-fives housing would not be categorized or designed as assisted living housing and would generally resemble the format and arrangement of regular social rent flats, with the exception that they would be clustered together and would only accommodate residents over the indicated age.

These community members joined together with Tustin's designers to tour a precedent assisted living newbuild in London as evidence of a closely related building arrangement, with residents being made aware of the distinction between the two typologies. The event helped to articulate dialogue around the user-group's leading priorities, which centered on the importance of landscape and green space, but also gave rise to a fairly novel interest in a one and a half bedroom living format – an arrangement that guarantees affordability whilst offering temporary, compact lodging for visitors or caregivers.

The event provided opportunity to residents to share an experience with their closest companions on the estate, and in turn, to share that experience with the people who would design the framework for fostering future moments of togetherness. The act of leaving the estate and holding space for listening in a completely separate context invited new opportunities for innovative thinking, discussion, and resolution.

Designers and Makers' Week

During the community engagement phase on the Tustin regeneration project, a week-long program for young residents living on the estate was launched as a Designers and Makers' Week. A design competition titled "Outside for Longer" was the central activity within the event, inviting fourteen to twenty-five years old individuals living on the estate to design an outdoor community space and play area for the estate. The event placed direct focus on the specific demographic and age composition of the Tustin community, helping to combat shortcomings of engagement involvement as highlighted by the RIBA in their response to the "Meeting the UK's Housing Demand" report. It demonstrated a need to not only identify and target different age groups, but to curate engagement activity that will allow those groups to unlock their ideas meaningfully, through processes and activity methods that allow them to feel uninhibited and motivated. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7. Design workshops at dRMM Architects' studio, part of Designers and Makers' Week.

The design team collaborated with local creative organizations and young people worked with the collaborators and members of the design team to explore, develop, and illustrate their creative ideas. A model making workshop allowed the youth group to explore their designs through physical making. Participants pitched their ideas and were awarded with a work experience opportunity in the architectural design studios, as well as cash prizes. Their insight into the estate and the surrounding area was integrated into the estate's development of landscape and public realm design. The engagement plan also included an event targeted at the estate's on-site

school community, consulting with the Head of School, students, and parents, who were not necessarily all living on the estate, but whose daily routines would be routinely connected with the site.

Co-Design and Innovation in Engagement

The walkabout, initial designs exhibition, over-fifty-fives' site visit, and Designers and Makers' Week within the Tustin Estate Engagement Plan each went towards understanding how resolutions to historic gaps or problems in housing design can be reached jointly. In co-design, traditional roles are upended; the end-user is given the position of expertise, whilst the designers' goal is work to channel insights, providing tools for generating and communicating ideas.²⁶ Co-designing is increasingly seen as a means to produce new knowledge as people develop and experiment with ideas around one specific subject²⁷ – disrupting customary ideas of design expertise and leadership and moving towards a system of co-design. (Fig. 8)

THURSDAY
4TH
NOVEMBER

The tour will take
place between
2.30 pm - 4.30 pm

JOIN US
for a study trip with
dRMM and Adam Khan Architects
Meeting point - Bowness House @ 1.15pm



**RESIDENT'S
STUDY TRIP**

Resident study trip to visit a housing project - Tower Court in Clapton, Hackney. Transport will be provided. Book your place at Thursday's Coffee mornings or by emailing tustin@southwark.co.uk

This project is currently under construction and is designed by Adam Khan Architects.

SEPT
22
2021



**TUSTIN ESTATE
COMMUNITY DAY**
3PM-8PM
**AT PILGRIMS
SCHOOL**

ENJOY GOOD FOOD
MUSIC, SPORT
GAMES AND MORE

MEET THE DESIGN TEAM
FOR THE TUSTIN ESTATE

Figure 8. Posters advertising the broad range of events used to create opportunities to listen to Tustin Estate residents.

Opportunity for innovation becomes embedded within the negotiation aspect of this idea development. In this sense, it is possible to regard engagement processes like those used on Tustin Estate as a methodology for approaching larger-scale social, economic, and urban challenges – championing listening as an approach to achieving measurable returns on quality, sustainability, and design endurance, working towards eliminating future need for demolition. If consultation phases and their associated findings are considered independently of the challenges around specific plots, and examined collectively, beyond the purpose of individual regeneration or development endeavors, they hold potential for a new way to interrogate prevalent, grassroots, and evolving deterrents to the right to housing.

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH INVOLVEMENT: THE VALUE OF SPECIFICITY AND OWNERSHIP

The decision to compose a nuanced, multi-event engagement model on Tustin stands as a worthy solution to some of the pitfalls still prevalent in traditional pre-planning consultation processes. If planned and executed thoughtfully and in concert with specific community characteristics, this model offers the promise of engaging with community sub-groups that might otherwise be disinclined to participate in typical engagement discussions. As cited earlier, youth groups are often less motivated to join in with engagement events and discussions, and as such their absence within these events could result in a set of design priorities that are skewed away from their distinct interests or requirements. Meaningful listening therefore must encompass diversity of activity, as well as diversity of tools to ensure their desires and needs are recognized and addressed. Different user groups may be more inclined to express themselves through creative output rather than moderated discussion. In Tustin, this was especially telling from the uptake in the youth Designer and Makers' Week event. (Fig. 9)

Victoria Durodula, a Tustin Estate resident, created the winning design for an outdoor bench during that week. Durodula's design secured her a week-long work experience placement at dRMM where she was supported in developing further design skills through workshops facilitated by the dRMM team. Her week with the studio culminated in her presentation of a design proposal for a community library. This once again speaks to the notion of a closed feedback loop – a process that begins with understanding how to listen, and then allowing the listening process to be validated by practical and tangible action.

Durodula's feedback on the entire engagement process points to the value felt by residents of being consulted holistically and consistently. "It was a good experience because I was able to get involved with the whole renovation process and put down my ideas and the problems that I had with living on Tustin Estate. I was able to have fun and talk with many different

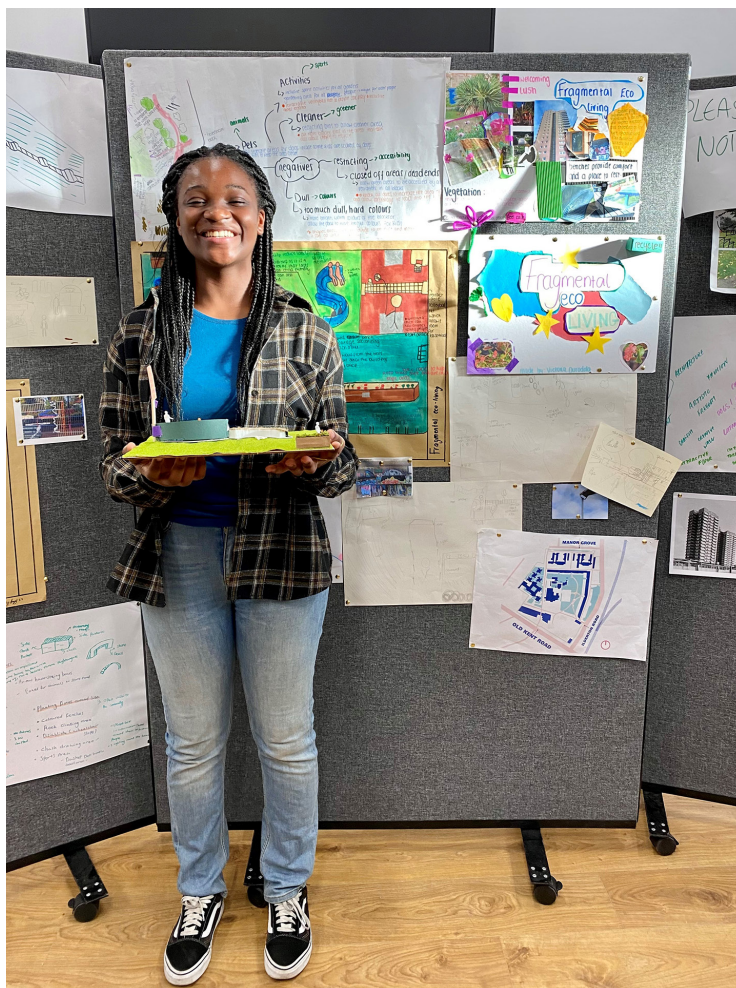


Figure 9. Tustin Estate resident Victoria Durodola presents her winning design at Designers and Makers' Week.

architects and designers and meet new people, talking to them about how the whole process was going to happen. I met people who are actually working on the design of my block and saw how my contribution would help shape the process. I made a little bench that I thought could help improve interaction with more people – because there are lots of people on the Tustin Estate that I have never talked to that maybe I would like to have the opportunity to talk to.”²⁸

Durodola described the importance of being able to communicate problems that might be straightforward, but left unchecked, can significantly alter quality of life on an estate. “Bins would get full downstairs really easily, so we suggested that [the collection] people would be able to come twice a week, because there are so many people that live in Tustin Estate and the bins get really packed, and sometimes we can see rats. And better lighting behind the blocks, because sometimes, if you want to go for a walk, the lighting is not really great.” Her testimony around the Engagement Plan demonstrates the value of listening as a means to cultivating stewardship through design that is cognizant of lived experience.

THE GOAL OF LONGEVITY: SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE ENDURANCE

From its inception, the project to redevelop Tustin Estate has sought to be community-led, positioning dialogue, and the idea of varied formats of listening, as a salient methodological tool for guaranteeing longevity in design. It should be said that this goes beyond securing a positive long-term architectural outcome for one master plan, and that the wider value in recording the Tustin engagement process is for it to become a blueprint for different scaled and tenured housing, and indeed for wider approaches of both social and environmental stewardship.

Stewardship is key in linking listening as a methodology to longevity as a goal. By definition, cultivating stewardship offers the best possibility for residents and community members to safeguard, to their best capacity, the material fabric of an estate. As such, the importance of Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) here comes into play, becoming a salient partner to engagement in the early and developmental stages of a design – POE equates listening to community members once a place has been delivered. This in turn fortifies an ongoing context of stewardship, manifested through the recurring and trust-building dialogue between community members, housing designers and their providers. POE following first phases of design can also be an important tool in influencing later phases of housing design, especially if paired with an intention for ongoing engagement throughout the entire lifespan of a project – this is the objective with Tustin Estate.

Stewardship and its synonymity with longevity also hold significant resonance with the material sustainability of future housing. As outlined by Architects Declare – a not-for-profit organization launched in the UK in 2019 to invite architecture professionals to pledge to a twelve-point declaration acting against the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity erosion – ²⁹ cultivating stewardship and ensuring environmental sustainability are two approaches that are intrinsically connected. In their 2021 “Practice Guide,” the organization highlights the importance of addressing the climate when designing places as a means to deconstruct “the structural inequalities that exist, and to ensure socially equitable outcomes.” ³⁰ Their guidance instructs designers and place-makers to avoid designing poorly performing new buildings that would require near-future retrofits, “in order to provide human comfort in a more challenging, changed climate, as this is inherently wasteful in resources and time.” ³¹

In this regard, pursuing stewardship and longevity as an outcome to engagement stands to be a strong tool to combat fundamental dilemmas around demolishing and developing new housing within a climate crisis. In an age in which replacing whole, or large percentages, of estates presents an increasingly unfavorable carbon scenario, listening to what will provide the greatest return to residents’ well-being is more than a socially altruistic endeavor, but an environmentally driven one.

Moreover, Southwark Council's Brownell emphasizes the shift in approach to estate design from the era within which the Tustin Estate was built up to now. "In the 1960s and 70s, estates were built for a short service life. There were not the same considerations then about longevity. There was a completely different mentality and there was not this consciousness about waste and materials. A disposable culture was emerging and there was no consideration for how long these buildings were going to last." Brownell explains how now, in 2022, place-makers are faced with housing stock coming to the end of its life. "We are in a different place in terms of our collective consciousness and concerns, and we understand that we cannot afford to build buildings that only last forty to fifty years or a bit over a generation. The planet is not going to sustain that. The fact that the buildings we build now, and the standards we build to, are so much better than they were, hopefully means that these buildings are going to last much longer. In the council, anything that has not got service life of at least sixty years – and really we prefer something more like one hundred plus – then it is not something we support."

TRANSLATION AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE: A BLUEPRINT FOR LONGEVITY

The Tustin Estate regeneration project is a specific example of housing – referring distinctly to an experience undergone on a council-led estate regeneration. As such, it places focus on a tenure of housing whose demands are not yet being met by supply: in recent years, the share of dwellings that are in London have increased in every borough, whilst the share that is social rented or owned with a mortgage has generally fallen.³² The particularities of Tustin's regeneration are unique to its site, community, history, and relationship with the wider city, yet it stands as a representation of how synergetic, co-operative processes can unlock potential for designing longer lasting housing more broadly – across different scales, types of tenancy and locations. Tustin positions listening as a methodology as the blueprint for longevity – a process which places community stewardship at the heart of designing housing. In so doing, it presents a model with potential to be evolved beyond estate regeneration and development by local authorities, becoming a default process for other projects such as developer-led schemes.

The varied events and efforts that combined to form the engagement process on Tustin – the pre-feasibility consultation; Residents' Manifesto; ballot vote; engagement plan activities; and ongoing correspondence, dialogue, and events – each represent an example of active knowledge-sharing and become component to a new methodology of listening. The value gained throughout the engagement process for the regeneration of the Tustin Estate can be seen as an overview of how designers can work with communities to identify universally beneficial housing principles. The methodology for listening conceivably applies to design activity beyond

housing, stretching to whole communities, working across education, cultural, workplace, and broader urban design.

As a regeneration project, Tustin Estate is still in its pre-delivery stages, meaning its success can only be determined by time. Ahead of that, the project invites a refocus of attention on the right to housing and asks – how can the definition of the right to housing be more explicitly determined by those who stand to benefit from it first-hand? How can the individuals and families who will occupy the new homes, the communities who will use the new public realm, steer the trajectories of how housing is designed and provided?

Tustin demonstrates a methodology by which all agents involved in the design of housing can close the loop between what is needed and what is being delivered to better unite the people who stand on either side. But it is not without challenges. A methodology of listening – which encapsulates all of the engagement processes outlined herein and beyond – places a significant burden of cost and time on the design process. It is largely dependent on the proclivity and capability of individual housing providers, designers, and residential communities themselves.

Moreover engagement, if executed in a phased, multi-faceted manner, lengthens the design process considerably, and therefore can inevitably be seen as a less attractive prospect for market-led schemes. As such, the goal of longevity derived from Tustin's methodology of listening should also put forward the proposition of cultivating stewardship as a measurable return on investment for all types and tenures of housing developments – in a market scenario, building places that foster a true instinct for care could warrant a financial uptick. Yet the tools for measuring that long-term return as a comparison to conventional housing turnover are not yet easily available or even discernible.

Financial considerations are frequently a barrier to activating nuanced and comprehensive models of engagement. In council-led schemes, the housing provider significantly benefits from the satisfaction of the community, and so engagement is seen as a strong tool in guaranteeing the best possible outcomes for residents. Yet beyond estate regeneration, where contractors disappear from a project's storyline once it has been built, engagement might present a less vital component. The lessons being learnt on Tustin point to a need for a radical re-prioritization *vis-à-vis* engagement across all housing development. As such, these lessons demonstrate that a thorough exercise of dialogue is what holds the key to unlocking better rights to housing and transferring methods of listening onto housing developments of all types.

The Tustin Estate regeneration is a unique and well-groomed opportunity for testing new and more comprehensive models for engagement. Championed by a council that had already set firm foundations for

community dialogue and prioritization and steered by a resident community that already held deep pride for the estate, Tustin holds remarkable potential for fostering an engagement process that goes beyond box-ticking defaults; an engagement process that positions democratic listening as the strongest future tool for shaping the way we live.

Notes

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Credits

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Figure 8: image by Beyond the Box Consultants.

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