West Ken & Gibbs Green Community Homes Limited

Melbourne Barrett
Executive Director of Housing and Regeneration
LB Hammersmith & Fulham Council
Hammersmith Town Hall Extension
King Street, Hammersmith
London W6 9JU

27 July 2012

Dear Mr Barrett

Proposed disposal of West Kensington & Gibbs Green estates: Consultation analysis and inspection arrangements – serious concerns

I write further to my letter of 26 June and to your invitation to respond to the Council's analysis of consultation responses, reported to Cabinet on 23 April 2012.

My previous letters exposed the serious discrepancies we detected in the binders for responses from the estates' residents, and which evidenced systematic bias of the results in favor of the Council's avowed sell-off and demolition agenda.

We have now inspected the 'wider area' binders, where we have found equally disturbing discrepancies, including forms apparently altered by the Council to suit miscategorisation.

I previously sent you the report of our first two inspections. I attach now the report of our three most recent inspections.

Missing forms, wandering binders, duplication, miscategorisation, and tampering: all these conspire to inflate the numbers in favour of demolition and to reduce the numbers against. This is an extraordinary situation, for which, I expect, you will be only too anxious to account.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Rosenberg
Community Organiser

West Ken & Gibbs Green Community Homes Ltd
West Kensington Estate Tenants & Residents Association
Gibbs Green & Dieppe Close Tenants & Residents Association

Cc: Derek Myers, Chief Executive LBHF; Andy Slaughter MP; The Information Commissioner; The People's Estates website.

Report from the three inspections of H&F Council's consultation analysis
July 27 2012
by Celine Kuklowsky, Community Organiser, West Ken & Gibbs Green estates

This report summarises three consecutive inspections I carried out on the H&F consultation feedback forms on June 27 at 2pm, July 5 at 2pm and July 16 at 2:30pm. Each time I was met by and supervised by Council Officer Dan Hollas. My previous inspections focused on the responses from residents of the estates. These inspections have focused on the responses from residents from the 'wider area'.

1) TOTALS

Each binder contains fewer forms than the totals stated by the Council. These numbers generally start out lower than the Council's totals and are further lessened by a significant number of unmarked duplicate forms (i.e. forms that are photocopied numerous times and present in the same or different binders without any mark identifying them as duplicates).

The table below represents the totals given by the Council's 'initial statistical analysis' report to Cabinet on 23 April 2012 as well as the totals I counted both with and without duplicate forms included.

It is difficult to spot duplicates when leafing through hundreds of forms. Therefore, the total number of forms I counted that exclude duplicate forms should be considered as conservative estimates of the true totals.

SUMMARY FINDINGS OF INSPECTION OF WIDER AREA RESPONSES				
CATEGORY	**Council Totals**	**Total forms counted including duplicates**	**Total forms counted without duplicates**	**Difference between H&F totals and my totals**
Wider Area Support (2 binders)	**597**	331	**297**	- 266 with duplicates **- 300 without**
Wider Area Neutral	**34**	31	**28**	- 3 with duplicates **- 6 without**
Wider Area Concerned	**32**	32	**26**	Same total with duplicates **- 6 without**
Wider Area Against the scheme	**108**	109	**80**	+1 with duplicates **- 28** without
Discounted binder	**189**	179	**167**	- 10 with duplicates **- 22 without**

2) DUPLICATES

There are two kinds of duplicate forms in the binders. One set of forms has the word "duplicate" or "copy" marked on it by the Council. I counted 47 of these in the Discounted binder. The other set is made up of responses that are photocopied and don't have any words or marks identifying them as copies. These forms are interspersed throughout all of the binders and are in much greater number than the marked duplicates. I counted 84 unmarked duplicates in the Wider Area For, Wider Area Against, Wider Area Concerned, Wider Area Neutral and the Discounted binders. (Previously, I counted many such forms in the estates binders – see my previous inspection reports). Some of the most noteworthy examples are:

- One form with the handwriting "Agree" in the first answer box and "no" in the second has been photocopied 10 times in the Wider Area Support 1 binder and twice in the Wider Area Support 2 binder without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- One form (containing the WKGGCH campaign's pre-filled answers as well as identical circular marks made by the Council) has been photocopied 16 times and placed in the Wider Area Against binder without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- One form handwritten "Yes" in response to the first question and no other response has been photocopied 7 times and is present in both of the Wider Area support binders without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- A little over 1/3 of answers that can be found in the Wider Area Support binder 1 can be found photocopied once in the Wider Area Support binder 2 without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- In the 'Discounted' binder, one form has the word "duplicate" on it and has been photocopied three times by the council

Some photocopied forms were found in contradictory binders:

- One form containing only the words "Am aware but fussed not" can be found both in the Wider Area Support and Wider Area Neutral binders, without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- A form with the words "disturbances should be kept to a minimum" was also placed in both binders without any mark identifying them as duplicates;
- One form with only the word "Unaware" is present in both the Wider Area Concerned and Wider Area Neutral binders without any mark identifying them as duplicates

The errors arising from extensive duplication appear to inflate the numbers supporting demolition and decrease the numbers opposing demolition.

3) MISCATEGORIZATION

There are numerous occasions where the Council clearly miscategorizes forms (I have observed this problem in the estate binders, and mentioned them in my previous inspection reports). For example:

- In the Wider Area in favour binder, at least four forms should be categorized as against the scheme, as one person states they are "dead against the pulling down" of the estates; another says "I think it is appalling that the Council is prepared to sell this land for £100 million"; the third states "not needed; redundant; unsustainable; poorly thought out; not appropriate to the local area or population" and the fourth "it would be an unlawful shame to lose this all"
- One form was entirely blank and counted as a "Wider Area Neutral" response

- 2 forms in the Wider Area Against binder mention social housing in general (for example "more cheap housing in London") but make no pronouncements on the scheme itself;
- One form in the Wider Area Against binder says "no objections" on it

Apart from the resident mentioned below in the 'Data Protection' section, there appear to be other problems with categorizing residents. In both the Wider Area Against and Wider Area Support binders, there is evidence that some of these respondents live on the estates and should not have been categorised into the wider area. For example, one person describes TV problems on the West Kensington estate and goes on to say that to "improve what we got would be just fine".

In the Wider Area Support 1 binder, there are 6 website responses which have no addresses on them. According to the Council's own rule, because they have no addresses, they should have been categorized into the discounted binder.

4) CENSORED INFORMATION

On many of the forms which have been duplicated, the Council has blacked-out parts or all of the responses, altering the import of the response. It has then placed different versions of the same form in different categories/ binders, according, it would seem, to suit those categories. This practice of blacking-out parts of forms was applied extensively apparently to shift forms across categories.

Some examples include:

- One form had the words "I like it. I would like something for young people e.g. community centre" written in the first answer box (no other writing on the form). This form was copied and placed both in the Wider Area Support binder and the Wider Area Against binder. However, in the latter binder, the words "I like it" were blacked out, so it only read "[black-out] I would like something for young people e.g. community centre" written in the first answer box.
- The word "disturbances" in the sentence "disturbances should be kept to a minimum" (mentioned in the Duplicates section) has been blacked out one form and not blacked out in a separate binder;
- One form has the words "I am aware of this development" entirely blacked out (with no other writing on the form) in the Wider Area Concerned binder. I saw this same form, not blacked out, in another Wider Area binder;
- Two forms have the words "not aware" (different forms) that are also entirely blacked out in the Wider Area Concerned binders,
- Another form simply states, "Don't care. You have already made up your minds" with the first part, "Don't care" blacked out in the Wider Area Concerned binder;
- In the discounted binder at least 10 forms have entire paragraphs blacked out

5) DATA PROTECTION ISSUES

On a significant number of forms, words and paragraphs have been blacked-out by the Council. This was done for "data protection reasons", according to the Council. There were a number of occasions where personal data should have been blacked-out (according to the Council's own rule for handling this material), but was not:

- At least four forms in the Wider Area Support 1 binder have email addresses in full view;

- One form in the Wider Area Support 1 binder has a telephone number in full view

In the Wider Area Against binder, one of the forms is an email sent from a resident to Secretary of State Eric Pickles. There are a number of problems with this form:

- The respondent's name and email address were not blacked-out;
- From my knowledge, I believe this respondent to be a resident of the West Kensington estate and not a resident of the wider area and as such his response should not be in this binder at all.

6) MULTIPLE SETS OF RESPONSES AND BINDERS

It's clear from my 5 inspection visits that there are multiple sets of response forms, as evidenced by the numerous unmarked duplicates present across the binders. Many forms have been photocopied so many times that the content of the form is significantly degraded or even impossible to read. It is unclear why there are as many photocopies, what system there is, if any to handle and classify these copies.

Different binders appeared throughout my several inspections. For example, on my 5 July visit, there were two "wider area support" binders (where there had previously only been one), and two "estate object" binders where there had previously only been one.

During my visit to the Council on 27 June 2012, Council Officer, Sarah Lovell, entered the room and removed a green binder with the words "Estates contradictory" on it that was not included in the binders I was allowed to see. This binder was held by Council Officer Dan Hollas at the time. I had never seen the binder before, nor did I see it again after my visit on 27 June.

7) NOTABLE CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS INSPECTIONS

Aside from the shifting binders described above, I noted a change has been made since my previous inspection report, suggesting there has been some tampering with the forms since their initial public release. During my inspection visit on 27 June 2012, I observed that the form which the Council had previously excluded for being "potentially violent", had been altered and re-categorized. The words "potentially violent" have been blacked-out by the Council and this new form was placed in the Wider Area Against binder.