



Social Housing:

**Integrating trees into social housing
redevelopment**



Chillingworth Road, Islington, London

**High density social housing can accommodate
existing trees as well as allow for future tree planting**

Introduction

The redevelopment of social housing has increased considerably in recent years. This has particularly been the case in inner city areas where established trees are most at risk from high density development. Due to the challenges created by social housing development that occurred in the 1960's and 1970's the redevelopment of these areas has been a high priority and social landlords have, in many cases been encouraged to proceed with wholesale redevelopment rather than refurbishment. While this is appropriate and desirable in a great many cases it can create issues for existing trees on these sites as well as limit opportunities for future tree planting if adequate space and infrastructure enhancements are not designed into the scheme.

The Chillingworth Road development in Islington is an excellent example of what can be achieved through a combination of partnership working, strong policies and local action coupled with political support.

Background

The site in Chillingworth Road used to be a dilapidated and redundant scout building. There were a number of large species structural trees on the periphery of the site as well as a considerable number of self-sown invasive species that had established following a period of neglect.

The Guinness Trust purchased the site with a view to building substantial residential dwellings on the site. A group of local residents which included a local councillor became aware of the plans and pro-actively engaged with the developer and the local authority in an attempt to amend the plans to reduce the level of tree loss.

Initially the large trees on the south western corner of the site were shown as being removed. Following lobbying by residents and negotiations between the council and the site owner a way forward was agreed to permit the construction at the required densities, but that also retained these and other trees as well as securing new tree planting in the communal courtyard areas of the development

Objectives

- To provide high density, high quality social housing
- To retain key structural trees both on and adjacent to the site
- To accommodate future generations of trees on and adjacent to the site
- To engage the local community in the protection of their green infrastructure.
- To implement local authority tree protection policies and planning conditions fully

Actions

- Pre-application meeting between developer and local authority
- Robust interpretation of tree retention policies
- Engagement of community through local councillors
- Supportive engagement by planning committee members
- Pre-application site visit between tree officer and developer to demarcate tree protection zones
- Building footprint agreed in principle prior to planning application
- Foundation design agreed in principle prior to planning application
- Regular on site supervision of tree protection measures during construction phase

Achievements

- Retention of prominent large species structural trees on site
- Construction of building foundations able to accommodate 2nd generation large species tree planting if retained trees are removed during lifetime of building
- Significant contribution to the principles of climate adaptation through urban greening
- New tree planting in courtyard providing shade and amenity for residents
- Visual amenity of wider area secured for future generation of residents
- Effective communications, increased knowledge base and trust building between all participants that rolled over into subsequent projects

Lessons Learnt

- Engagement on tree issues must be undertaken at the earliest opportunity i.e. the conceptual and design stages
- Expert arboricultural advice should be obtained at these stages of the scheme as well as during development and implementation
- Set down clear markers on which trees should be retained from the outset
- Establish effective communications between partners
- Construction phase site supervision inspections by the tree officer are essential

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