



## **Citizens Involvement Support Centre**

M.E.L Research Limited, Aston Science Park, Birmingham B7 4AX  
TEL 0121 604 4664 FAX 0121 604 6776 EMAIL [consult@m-e-l.co.uk](mailto:consult@m-e-l.co.uk)

# **NORTH PRIORY ESTATE RESIDENT ASPIRATIONS SURVEY 2006**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

**SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS**

MEL Research & Service Development

❖ Measurement ❖ Evaluation ❖ Learning

*A modern consultancy practice that's truly different!*

## Dudley MBC North Priory Estate Resident Aspirations 2006

### Report on Overall Results of Survey

#### E1 Background and Methods

In August 2006 Dudley MBC commissioned M.E.L Research to undertake a survey of housing and community aspirations and perceptions, amongst residents of the North Priory estate. All 270 properties were approached by a specialist interview team from M.E.L Research and successful interviews were completed with residents from 222 of these properties, a response rate of 82%. This level of response is remarkably high for this type of social survey research undertaken in the sometimes tough environment of needy neighbourhoods, and shows:

- the high level of interest that residents have in the subject matter of the survey and the future of their properties and neighbourhood;
- the effectiveness of the communication campaign conducted by the Council and active local residents, in promoting the survey;
- the intensive and persistent efforts of the M.E.L field survey team in calling on residents at least four times at different times and days of the week.

To complement the householder survey, a separate smaller household and on-street survey was also carried out specifically with 24 younger people aged 16 – 24 who were not tenants or home owners, to ensure the views of young people and future potential residents in the area were included in the overall research.

The objectives of the survey were to gather:

- a picture of the strength of community affiliation and 'social capital' in the area;
- views on environmental, social and community problems in the area;
- opinions on the future regeneration of the estate;
- and 'difficult choices' which people may have to make about this future.

The research is one of a growing number of projects being undertaken by M.E.L to assist in developing improved public services. *M.E.L stands for measurement, evaluation, learning* – the three key qualities for modern public service excellence. This project reflects our core aim of using evidence to shape better public services.

This report presents a brief management summary of the results. The core results presented here are for the general (householder) group; these are compared where relevant to the results of the separate young people's survey. Some of the questions on community aspirations were asked in a wider survey across the whole of Dudley for Dudley MBC in 2004, and where relevant the North Priory results are compared to this borough-wide baseline.

#### E2 Connections with North Priory and affiliation to the area

The area contains two contrasting groups of residents:

- Nearly a third (29%) have lived in North Priory for over 20 years. This is greater than the Borough 2004 baseline (20%).
- On the other hand, nearly a half (45%) have only lived there for five years or less (12% for less than a year). This is also greater than the Borough-wide 2004 average (35%).

Family connections are very important to a substantial proportion of residents:

- A quarter (26%) were brought up in North Priory (compare 38% of the young people's sample were brought up there)

- Over a third (35%) have members of their family currently living in North Priory (in households other than their own)
- Approaching a half (43%) have had a family connection with North Priory for over 20 years.

Most people like living in the area. More than half (60%) say on balance that it is 'an area they enjoy living in' and around a third (34%) say North Priory is 'somewhere they really like and feel proud of'. For the young people's sample, this latter figure is still higher (58%).

However, 24% of residents say it is just somewhere to live or work, and 15% say it is 'somewhere they don't like'.

The figure of 60% saying the area is one they enjoy living in, is lower than the Borough baseline (95%) and lower than for the group of Dudley 'managed neighbourhoods' that was also surveyed in the 2004 research (85%).

When asked how well informed they feel about what is going on locally, the sample splits pretty evenly with half (51%) saying they are well informed, but almost the same proportion (47%) saying they are not. When it comes to exerting real influence, the proportion saying they can influence local decisions in the area falls to around a third (32%) with the majority (60%) saying they cannot.

It is nevertheless noteworthy that the 32% who feel they can influence decisions is higher than for the 2004 Dudley data (where the Borough-wide baseline was 29%, and in fact only 21% in the 'managed neighbourhoods'). Residents in North Priory appear to feel more engaged in local decisionmaking than in comparable areas elsewhere in the Borough.

In contrast however only 38% of the young people felt well informed and only 17% said they could influence local decisions. This group may therefore be missing out on some of the engagement locally.

### E3 Perceptions about local facilities and services

Residents were asked their views about the quality of life in North Priory as it is now.

The characteristics most true of the area were felt to be:

- Good public transport system – 74% true
- Good sense of community spirit – 60% true
- Plenty of green open spaces – 50% true

On the other hand, the characteristics most felt not to be true of the area were:

- Good quality housing – 80% not true
- Clean and green, no litter – 79% not true
- Good local job opportunities – 76% not true
- Lots of activities for young people – 74% not true
- Low levels of crime and vandalism – 67% not true

When asked about their satisfaction with local services, those with high satisfaction ratings were:

- Local bus service – 78% satisfied
- Parks and open spaces – 61% satisfied
- Schools – 55% satisfied
- Local shops – 54% satisfied
- Library facilities – 51% satisfied

The services with least satisfaction were:

- Quality of the housing – 68% dissatisfied
- Activities for young people – 62% dissatisfied
- Provision of community facilities – 50% dissatisfied
- Provision of services for older people – 43% dissatisfied

These results were also broadly similar amongst the young people's sample.

We asked residents if the area had improved or got worse over the past two years. Views were evenly split exactly 50:50 on the general balance of improved or got worse; however only 3% said things had got 'much better' while 27% said 'much worse'. The pessimistic view was therefore held more intensely than the positive view. A very similar picture emerged amongst the young people consulted.

The problems people felt were most acute in the area were:

- Litter and rubbish on the streets – 56% say this is a 'very big problem'
- Teenagers hanging around on the streets – 41%
- Vandalism and graffiti – 40%
- Cars parked badly or dangerously – 38%
- People being insulted or intimidated on the street – 32%
- Road safety problems – 31%.

#### E4 Views on regeneration options

The survey then focussed on the specific options for the regeneration of North Priory. Four basic choices were presented to residents, broadly in line with the options on which consultation has taken place to date. When asked to choose one option, the resulting 'ballot' showed:

- Keep the estate as it is, with only basic repairs to some homes – 20% (16% young people)
- Regeneration of a few of the properties, for example Pine Road – 14% (4% young people)
- Regenerate about half of the estate with new properties – 12% (21% young people)
- Demolish the whole lot and completely rebuild it – 55% (58% young people).

The wholesale demolition and rebuild option is therefore the clear favourite amongst both the general resident sample and the young people's sample, and holds a majority over the three alternative options combined.

Residents were asked to make a similar choice about the future tenure mix (noting that 83% of all households interviewed were renting from the Council).

- Keep it mainly rented from the Council – 53% (29% young people)
- Have a few new properties that people can buy or rent – 16% (33% young people)
- Have quite a lot of properties people can buy or rent – 21% (29% young people)
- Have most of the properties mainly for people to buy – 10% (8% young people)

Once again a clear verdict emerges, with the 'mainly council rented' option being favourite amongst the resident sample and holding a clear majority over all three alternative options combined. Younger people are less committed to the council rented option and more favourable towards a wider tenure mix.

As it may not be practicable for residents to achieve both their aspirations for large scale regeneration and a future predominance of council tenure, later in the survey people were asked about the difficult matter of making choices between tenure and property preferences.

For most people it would be important following the regeneration, that they should move back onto North Priory. For 40% of the residents, this was very important and for a further 23% it was fairly important – about two-thirds overall therefore saying they would want to return. For a fifth (21%) this however was not important to them at all.

Amongst the younger people's sample however only 21% said it was very important to return, although 54% said it was fairly important, giving rather more with a general inclination to return and rather fewer with a strong determination to return.

Similarly in terms of personal housing aspirations aside of the regeneration, 62% of the resident sample said they would be looking to stay in North Priory but 38% would actually be looking to move somewhere else. For the younger people less (42%) would look to stay and more (58%) to move.

- Reasons people gave for staying in North Priory included: friendly neighbourhood, community spirit, know friends and family there, lived there for ages, don't want disruption of moving, care for people locally, good neighbours, handy shops, convenient location, good schools.
- Reasons for leaving included: trouble and anti-social behaviour, bullying in school, children not safe, busy roads, noisy, prefer Wrens Nest or Kingswinford, go to a better area.

Detailed verbatim comments on this question are appended.

Although the majority of residents preferred the area to remain mainly council-rented after the regeneration, we tested the extent to which current residents may be interested in home ownership. In total 11% were definitely interested in the possibility of buying a home if they could afford it after the regeneration, and 43% were possibly interested. However 41% were definitely not interested.

Amongst the younger people, while only 4% were definitely interested in buying, 67% were possibly interested, with only 8% definitely not interested. General interest in home ownership is therefore higher in this group.

When the 'difficult choices' were examined in detail, some interesting results were observed. When asked to choose between pairs of alternative options, some of the notable findings were:

|   |     |     |  |
|---|-----|-----|--|
| I want the Council to still own my home                     | 34% | 66% | I want a better quality home               |
| I want to see more new homes built for people to rent       | 26% | 74% | I want the area to be cleaner and safer    |
| I want better housing provision for elderly residents       | 40% | 60% | I want the Council to still be my landlord |
| I want to stay living in North Priory                       | 43% | 57% | I want to live in a better quality house   |
| I want to stay a Council tenant                             | 55% | 45% | I want to stay living in North Priory      |
| I'd like to own a good home if I could afford it            | 43% | 57% | I want to stay living in North Priory      |
| I want investment to improve the environment on this estate | 60% | 40% | I want the Council to still own my home    |

The choices are difficult and in many cases views are evenly divided. For example:

- If the choice was between staying in North Priory and having a better house, the majority would opt for a better house.
- If the choice was between being a tenant and having a better house, the clear majority would opt for a better house.
- If the choice was between living in North Priory and being a tenant, the majority would opt to be a tenant.
- However if the choice was between improving the estate and being a tenant the majority would opt for improving the estate.

Amongst the younger people, although numbers are small, the general trend is the same but the differences are accentuated (they make clearer choices).

## E5 Overall summary

- ◆ North Priory has a strong group of residents firmly attached to the area, with a long history and extensive family connections in the area; there is a similar and possibly larger group of recent arrivals however with little history or connection with the area.
- ◆ Aside of their history, most people enjoy living in the area.
- ◆ About half feel informed and a third feel involved in local decisions; this involvement is comparatively high but does not hold up for younger people.
- ◆ The area is felt to have good transport access, community spirit and green open spaces. The problem areas are poor quality housing, poor environmental quality, not enough jobs and not enough for young people to do.
- ◆ Most want the estate to be completely regenerated; this is true of residents generally and also the young people.
- ◆ Most want it to stay mainly council rented but the younger people are less wedded to this.
- ◆ About two-thirds would want to return to North Priory after the regeneration and for nearly half this is very important; it is also important for young people but less intensely so.
- ◆ A little over a half might be interested in home ownership if they could afford it, and amongst young people the interest is somewhat higher.

**MEL Research & Service Development, Aston Science Park, Birmingham B7 4AX**

**Contract Pr06.098 September 2006**