

Changing places, changing lives

Assessing the impact of housing
association regeneration: Summary

This report summarises the impact of L&Q's regeneration work in seven locations in London. Published in our 50th anniversary year, it has enabled L&Q to learn from our achievements and to develop a set of principles that will guide us over the next 50 years.

Importantly, this summary also provides an independently developed framework that L&Q and other housing providers could use in future to evaluate the impact their regeneration has on residents and their communities.

Goldsmiths

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regeneration: Summary**



Haggerston, Hackney

Introduction

50 years of creating places where people want to live

At L&Q we are marking our 50th anniversary year by learning from our achievements and developing a set of principles that will guide us over the next 50 years.

In this project we set out to discover the ingredients for successful cities and communities. As part of that, we brought in independent experts to probe our own practice and help us identify what we need to learn for the future. We asked the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) at Goldsmiths, University of London to assess L&Q's impact across a number of regeneration projects in London.

By definition this research analyses the work of one housing association in one city. However, we believe the work undertaken can contribute to a wider debate within the housing sector. Therefore, in this report, we provide details of the impact assessment framework developed by the CUCR, so that others can also benefit from it.

We believe that it is a critical part of our work to develop a set of principles to guide L&Q over the next 50 years. We know that our mission – ‘creating places where people want to live’ – starts with building more homes. However, it is also about much more than that. To succeed in future we must:

- Connect with employment, education, health, employment, the arts and whatever works locally to create successful communities;
- Tap into local communities, local intelligence and local commitment;
- Create tenure-blind mixed communities, rich in diversity;
- Assess the impact of our work over the long-term and share the results;
- Learn from different approaches;
- Focus on what we do best and work with like-minded organisations to do the rest; and
- Forge strong partnerships, based on trust, with local authorities to deliver their vision.

If there is anything good about austerity it is that it can be liberating – we could wait for the money to come back but we will probably wait a long time. Instead, we are taking responsibility for our own future. With liberation comes choice and with choice comes risk – the risk that we could lose sight of our founding social principles.

That is why this discussion is so important to us. In the year of our 50th anniversary we want to embed our social principles deep in our foundations so that we stay true to them forever.

In 50 years' time we want the documentaries to tell us that we got it right: that austerity forced us to reinvent housing and that, in partnership with others, we created places where people want to live.

David Montague
Chief Executive, L&Q



Aerial view of Haggerston



Key findings

We asked the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths, University of London, to carry out in-depth research covering seven major regeneration schemes across London. These included:

- Aylesbury 1a, Southwark;
- Beaumont: Forest Homes, Waltham Forest;
- Haggerston, Hackney;
- Lewisham Park, Lewisham;
- River Mill Park, Lewisham;
- Silwood, Lewisham; and
- Green Horizons, Enfield

The Guardian's Professional Housing Network also asked housing professionals from across the country to comment, to add a national perspective to some of the issues raised.

This independent analysis by the CUCR reveals that L&Q has had a considerable positive impact on the type and quality of homes provided. Our research has evidenced that L&Q has worked in partnership to improve the homes and their surrounding environs. L&Q has also worked, usually in partnership, to meet broader community aims and address, often longstanding, local issues.

Key findings

L&Q's contribution to this includes:

- Physical and community development resources;
- Co-ordinating and procuring development and community activities; and
- Supplying dedicated, sometimes neighbourhood-based, staff to liaise with residents, stakeholders and delivery partners during and after regeneration.

Living up to expectations

The research indicates that L&Q achieved, and in some instances surpassed, its original 'offer' or aims in all of the profiled areas with regard to supply of homes and additional infrastructure, community and resident benefits.

Whilst the processes involved in large-scale regeneration schemes are complex and often contentious, L&Q has evidenced a strong commitment to working closely with local residents and stakeholders throughout the development phases.

The research revealed evidence of good practice in relation to L&Q's work regarding resident involvement. For example, investment in arts and cultural activities has been valuable in mediating negative public perceptions of the regeneration process. In Haggerston, collaboration with small arts initiatives has created opportunities for public debate, built community interactivity and developed a sense of place. There is clearly scope for considering the value of such approaches to managing change and bringing residents together simultaneously.

Resident views of the schemes have been varied and have often changed over time. Several L&Q tenants who had lived in the area prior to regeneration spoke of initial scepticism about the

proposed developments, particularly where this involved a change in landlord from the local authority to L&Q. However, the research also detailed the consultation processes involved, and the efforts made by L&Q staff to involve residents. Some of the residents interviewed described how through this process their views had changed and how they were now positive about the benefits of the regeneration for themselves and for the area.

Building relationships with local residents and groups and 'hand holding' through the processes of consultation, development and subsequent management has been critical. The clarity about these processes and residents seeing their ideas and involvement in decisions being actualised has also been important. For example, one resident on Aylesbury spoke proudly of how they had insisted that the new build used typical London yellow stock bricks.

Improving housing and surroundings

Across the researched regeneration areas, L&Q will have built over 3,300 new homes, of which 2,409 are socially rented. Over £538 million has been invested in homes across five of the locations (Aylesbury, Beaumont, Haggerston, Lewisham Park and Silwood). In three locations, L&Q contributed community buildings and/or environmental improvements to developments, totalling £6 million (Aylesbury, Beaumont and Haggerston) and over £5 million in commercial properties across two schemes (Aylesbury and Haggerston).

Across the locations, L&Q generated additional funds from external sources, bringing considerable added value. The interviews highlighted the considerable investment of housing association staff time across all of the developments.

The combined investment of regeneration-focused funding, together with the staff development and management resources, has improved the physical living conditions across all of the schemes for residents. The research also found that the improvements brought about by regeneration and refurbishment are being actively maintained to a high level by both L&Q staff and by residents. Residents interviewed commented on various positive aspects, including the quality of architecture, the space, layout, security and reductions in anti-social behaviour. The physical and environmental changes are broadly reflected in the decreases in indices of deprivation, where one of the four factors is housing.

Creating viable communities

One of the biggest impacts of L&Q's regeneration activities has been the changes in the mix and variety of tenure. Some of these have radically changed from being socially rented mono-tenure with small numbers of leaseholders to a mixed tenure with high percentages of private and shared ownership. Alongside this, the schemes have seen significant changes in population, specifically population growth and changes in ethnic mix. These changes highlight the need for initiatives, resources and spaces that enable social interaction and connections between established and new residents, which also bridge socio-demographic divides and income disparity.

The research raises the question of whether the new residents become an integral part of a transformed local community who share a sense of place. Alternatively, do residents simply live alongside each other in 'their own little bubble'?

In Aylesbury, Haggerston and River Mill Park, L&Q is working in areas where inner-city regeneration

and gentrification is having a significant impact on the socio-demographic make-up of neighbourhoods. This is challenging for social housing providers who seek to ensure that community cohesion and sustainability are carefully considered and resourced.

Two of the research areas (Beaumont Green and Horizons) offer strong examples of L&Q being a force for building a sense of inclusion and cohesion between communities. Green Horizons won a Chartered Institute of Housing award for innovative community safety. Schemes such as Aylesbury 1A and Haggerston provide an opportunity to monitor how a sense of community grows in a mixed tenure development over time.

When one Aylesbury resident was asked about the scheme, his view was that the 'old community' now resides in the new scheme. However, the question of how long-term Aylesbury residents interact with newer residents and the extent to which a sense of community grows remains to be seen. On Beaumont there was the view that there is some 'separateness' between different groups of residents, whilst on Silwood staff were of the view that residents tended to live in 'different worlds'. L&Q will undoubtedly continue to be a critical factor in this dynamic and are in the position through their development and management roles to facilitate interactive communities.

Enhancing well-being and life chances

In two of the profiled locations, Beaumont and Silwood, population analysis and interviews reveal that L&Q has helped to reduce crime. It is also likely that L&Q has contributed to the decrease of some

Key findings

indicators of deprivation. In Silwood, changes to levels of deprivation and qualification could be due, in part, to population movement. On the Beaumont estate, L&Q led on regenerating the area and, as part of this, it spearheaded change, with targeted action aimed at cutting levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

It is worth noting that where there is evidence of a reduction in crime and deprivation in L&Q schemes, interviews with ‘on the ground’ staff suggest that this is, in part, due to the changes in population (resulting from decanting), which have contributed to the success (this is the case on Beaumont and Silwood). However, it can also be attributed to L&Q’s determination to tackle local anti-social behaviour issues and to work in partnership with local residents, police and local authorities to do so. This change is then embedded through the ongoing engagement and responsiveness of management teams.

L&Q, as a large housing association and property developer, has considerable resources at its disposal at a time when many voluntary sector agencies providing community level services are facing severe financial difficulties. L&Q often invests in local agencies as part of its community investment strategy. The work on the Aylesbury estate offers a positive illustration of how local needs can be assessed and responded to through strong collaborative partnerships (in this instance with the Creation Trust). Through these types of additional community-based initiatives, it is likely that there is impact on individual residents’ well-being and life chances.

Overarching findings

This research highlighted the unique position of housing associations in London. It also found that L&Q:

- Achieved its ‘offer’ in relation to homes, infrastructure, community and residents benefits;
- Has had extensive impact in re-shaping neighbourhoods;
- Needs to record evidence better from the outset – enabling benchmarking and full assessment of resulting impacts;
- Ensured that staff from all teams focused on the common goal of community benefit;
- Needs to make sure that a legacy plan is in place; and
- Demonstrated embedded principles, informing practice across the staff team.

Looking to the future

In their final observations, CUCR’s independent researchers were able to draw some encouraging conclusions. They felt that the combined drivers of L&Q staff commitment, physical (such as design and infrastructure) and population changes have contributed to significant transformations in the profiled schemes. Private sales/intermediate market rent and shared ownership have provided the essential funds in order to make this possible and financially viable.

The future density and tenure mix of these locations had risen, is rising or is set to rise. This is a context that is conducive to exploring housing and community integration practices set against the backdrop of a debate about how to negotiate a balance between the social responsibilities and the financial imperatives of the sector.



Residents at a community day on the Beaumont Estate, Leyton



River Mill Park, Lewisham



Impact assessment framework

The current economic and political climate makes it critically important for social housing providers to be able to evidence their unique practices and resulting impacts. This can only be done by establishing clear aims and measurements as part of the development process.

This report presents findings from the development of an impact assessment framework and its application across seven L&Q regeneration developments.

Impact assessment framework

How landlords can measure impact more effectively

This framework is something that L&Q and other developers and housing providers could use systematically to assess the impact of their work. While it will undoubtedly require further work to develop a simplified model that is readily usable and able to inform setting baselines, this framework from the CUQR is a valuable starting point.

The framework evolved as a result of enquiring into:

- Housing and third sector impact assessment models and indicators;
- Available L&Q development, community investment and management information data; and
- National, regional and city data sets that would complement, or allow for, the comparison and triangulation of housing association data.

The main thrust of the framework was to use data sets and field work to assess changes that have occurred in regeneration locations and explore whether it is possible to ascertain who or what brought about these changes, who the changes have benefitted and in what ways.

Asking whether a neighbourhood has improved and who has benefitted from the changes leads to consideration of a significant number of complex factors. Asking which agencies have delivered which changes is complex too, as organisations often work in partnership to regenerate neighbourhoods. The identification of causal changes in a given neighbourhood, and pinpointing who has benefitted from change, is therefore a challenging task.

Thus, the drive to be able to assess the impacts of housing and neighbourhood developments has resulted in large numbers of physical and non-physical neighbourhood change indicators being generated. These cut across fields such as mental health, building and design and well-being. In general, the indicators are designed to help measure the impact of services and projects on places and, more latterly, people.

The framework focussed on indicators that covered:

- Regeneration scheme information, such as the intended size, aims and beneficiaries of the scheme;
- Locational information, such as siting and key features;
- Resident and neighbourhood management information, such as L&Q tenant data and resident satisfaction; and
- Social and physical changes to the location, such as population changes.

The report *Creating Strong Communities: How to Measure the Sustainability of New Housing Developments* was important to the framework. Published recently by Berkeley Homes in partnership with Social Life and the University of Reading, it uses three dimensions to assess sustainable regeneration:

- amenities and infrastructure;
- opportunities for residents to influence; and
- social and cultural opportunities.

In order to tie the assessment framework into L&Q's community investment strategy CUQR used the strategy's headings to categorise regeneration activity that fell within the 'social and cultural opportunities' dimension. L&Q's four community strategy headings are: increased employability, positive youth futures, strengthening communities and financial inclusion.

The impact assessment framework has a mix of features that are not found together in other assessment models:

- It is exploratory in nature. It examines the impact of L&Q in the neighbourhoods whilst yielding lessons about the assessment tools and impact assessments on housing;
- It is not definitive. It highlights lessons about how impacts might be better recorded in the future. It explores a range of social, economic and built environment factors relating to L&Q's participation in developing and maintaining neighbourhoods;
- It seeks to identify causal changes in locations. Where possible, it then looks at the extent to which we can know L&Q has contributed to neighbourhood changes;
- It is designed to explore issues surrounding the identification of beneficiaries from regeneration activity, and the ways in which they have benefited;
- It recognises the useful data that housing associations hold. In their neighbourhood management and community investment roles they have the potential to gather considerable amounts of information on tenants, leaseholders and neighbourhoods. This framework attempts to deploy that data alongside national and regional data sets in order to assess the impact of association development activity; and
- It uses data held by social landlords. Housing associations have development, neighbourhood management and community teams who all contribute to the development and sustainability of neighbourhoods. The framework draws data from across these teams to assess impact.

Impact assessment framework

How landlords can measure impact more effectively

Recent research into impact assessment in social housing has revealed that the sector as a whole needs to develop a greater consensus around how it measures and evidences its impact.

Given the above factors, this impact assessment framework has the potential to make a considerable contribution to sector learning.

This impact assessment framework will prove invaluable to L&Q as we seek to evaluate the effects of our regeneration work over the coming years. It will help us to make sure we are living up to the principles that guide us – and that we are genuinely creating places where people want to live.



