

West Lancashire Borough Council  
Housing and Regeneration Service



## Appendix A

Consultation.  
Beechtrees  
Revival  
Scheme

Report,  
Analysis and  
Findings

"To be a top performing  
landlord within an  
economically vibrant West  
Lancs"

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# 1 Introduction and Purpose of the Report

To assess the suitability of the proposed revival scheme for Beechtrees, Digmaor, a consultation exercise was carried out in March and April 2015.

The proposed plans consist of the full refurbishment of 6no detached blocks of flats, Partial refurbishment of 2no attached blocks of flats and the demolition of 3no attached blocks of flats and 4 houses. The space cleared from the demolitions would be used to build 14no new houses.

The area has suffered for many years with a high turnover of tenancies and high void levels. Combined with high repair costs, this has caused the flats to have a negative NPV (net present value).

The purpose of this report is examine the results of the consultation exercise and other feedback received during the process in order to ascertain if any changes to the scheme need to be made

## 2 Methodology

A consultation pack was sent out in February 2015 to every resident on Beechtrees as well as residents of other estates which may have been affected by the proposed scheme. The purpose of this was to assess the reaction of the residents in the area to the scheme and also to see if any changes could be made to improve the scheme.

The consultation pack itself contained a detailed description of the scheme including architect's drawings and Artists impressions. The reasons for the scheme were also explained as clearly as possible.

A questionnaire was included in the pack which was designed to invite opinions about the scheme and any changes that may be made to improve it. As well as this, a number of other ways to comment on the scheme were given including a dedicated phone number and email, and details of a drop-in consultation event which was held 2-3 weeks after the packs were sent, and was open to all local residents. These points of contact were also included in a press release so that any interested parties were able to comment on the scheme. The pack included a return envelope which was pre-paid to encourage a good response.

To allow more effective analysis of the data, several questions regarding the circumstances of the tenants themselves were included. The survey itself was anonymous but includes an option to include an address to allow any area specific data to be identified and analysed.

The questionnaire was printed and sent using an external web based printing service (iMail) to ensure that all of the packs were received at the same time and in advance of the general press release. The reason for this was to ensure that anyone who would potentially have to vacate their properties would be informed in writing before the scheme was publicly announced.

The questionnaire was distributed using the standard Royal Mail second-class post.

The consultation event was held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the Evermoor centre close to Beechtrees. There were 22 attendees in total and staff involved in developing the scheme were available to answer questions along with members of staff from the voids and allocations team, and officers involved in similar projects.

Attendees of the consultation event were also asked to complete a questionnaire form if they had not already done so. The form was also available to complete online using survey monkey through a dedicated page on the West Lancashire Website.

The deadline for the consultation was set as 31<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

### 3 Questionnaire Response

This section outlines the responses received in the various forms of the consultation.

Out of the 227 consultation packs distributed, 16 completed questionnaires were returned – this equates to 7%. A further 6 were completed during the consultation event and 2 were completed online via the consultation website.

In addition to this, 3 enquiry forms were completed and notes were taken by officers to record additional views and comments by attendees.

Although the survey was anonymous, 14 of the total 24 respondents chose to give their address.

<i>Location of respondee</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
<i>Flats and houses on Beechtrees included in the revival where the tenants will need to move out.</i>	9
<i>Flats on Beechtrees included in the revival where the tenants will remain in situ.</i>	1
<i>Houses immediately adjacent to the revival area</i>	3
<i>Other houses on Beechtrees</i>	1
<i>No address given</i>	10
<i>Total responses</i>	24

#### Outcomes

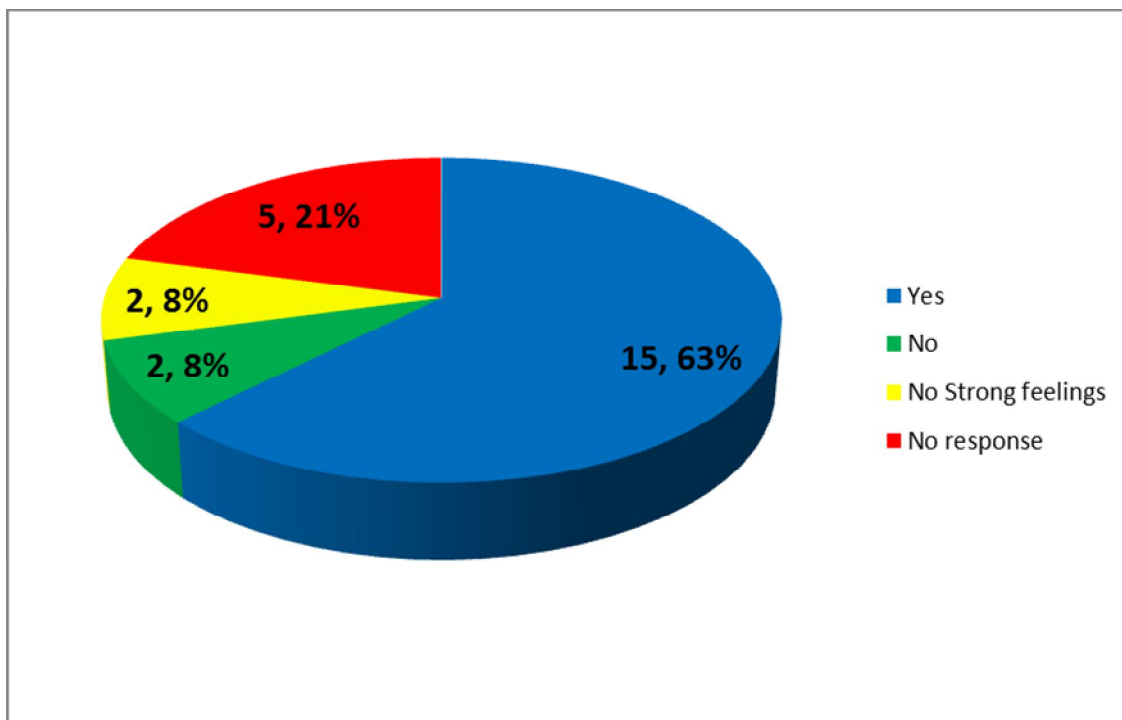
- Due to the size of the survey and the number of returns, the usual confidence level of 95% cannot be achieved within a reasonable confidence indicator. (Actual confidence indicator was calculated as **XXXX%**)
- Due to the fact that the consultation event and online consultation were open to any interested parties, analysis of the spatial distribution of responses becomes difficult.
- Bearing these limitations in mind, the majority of returns received were from people directly affected by the revival scheme with the largest contingent being tenants who would need to move if the scheme goes ahead in its current form.

## 4 Questionnaire Results:

This section covers the 6 questions asked on the survey, relating to the proposed revival scheme as detailed in the consultation pack.

### Question 1: Do you agree with the Beechtrees revival scheme in principal?

Of the 24 surveys received, there were 19 responses to this question. The chart below shows the results.



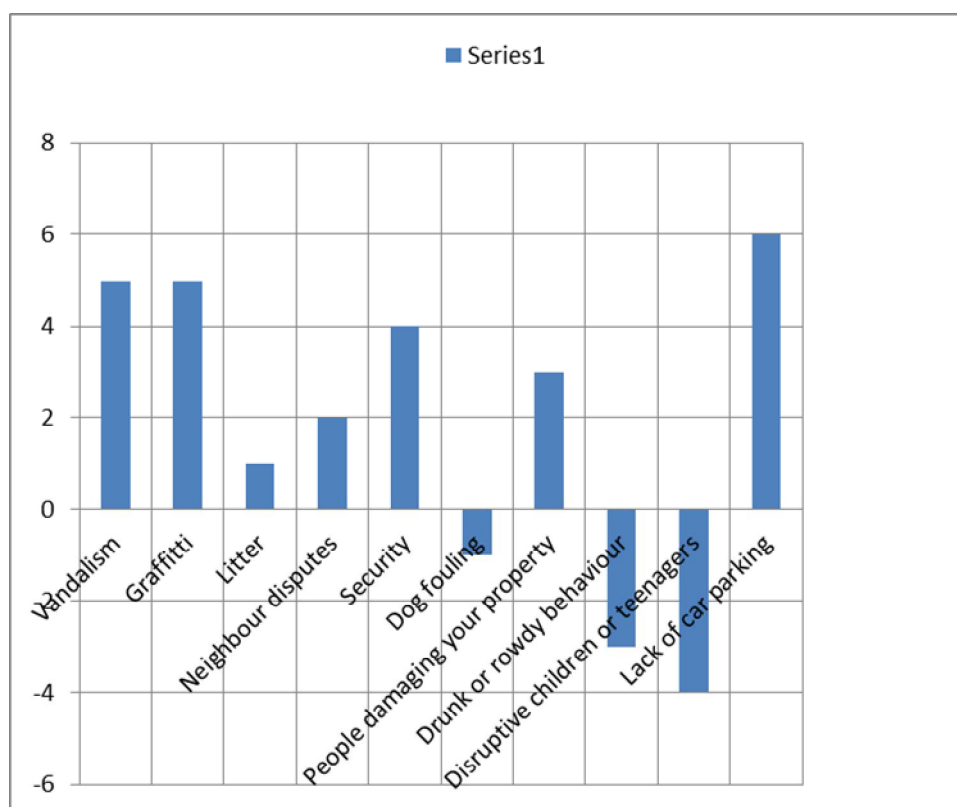
#### Outcomes

- As the chart shows, the majority of responses were largely positive about the scheme in general.
- The negative responses are likely from tenants who would have to move out if the scheme goes ahead in its current form. Information regarding the help and support given to help tenants move are not finalised and so could not be included in the consultation packs sent out. This may have caused some people to feel anxious about the scheme. During the consultation event more detailed information was available thanks to the presence of members of the housing team and officers involved with the Firbeck revival scheme which included a similar demolition element.

## Question 2: what effect do you think the scheme will have on the following problems?

The categories for this question were closely based on the tenant survey which was carried out during summer 2013. The responses to that survey provided information regarding which problems the tenants regarded as most important.

In order to quantify and analyse the data received, the responses were converted into numbers, 1 to indicate a positive effect, 0 for no effect and -1 for a negative effect. This method provides an overall net positive or negative value for illustrative purposes.



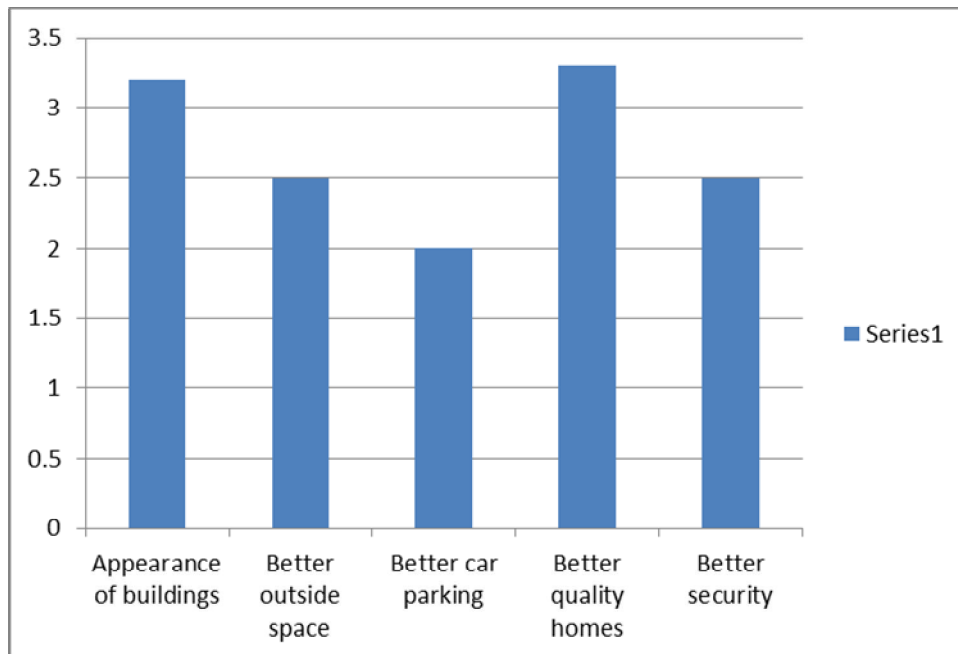
### Outcomes

- The problem on which the respondents felt would be most positively affected by the scheme is lack of car parking. This is likely to be because the new build houses will incorporate parking within the curtilage of the properties. Interestingly, the overall number of off road parking spaces on the scheme would be reduced due to the conversion of the garages along with the bedsits into 2 bed flats.
- The problem on which the respondents felt would be most negatively affected by the scheme is disruptive children or teenagers, closely followed by drunk or rowdy behaviour. It is difficult to see why this might be perceived to be the case other than the fact that houses will be built in place of flats which would provide more family friendly accommodation.
- The other main perceived positive effects were on vandalism and graffiti. This could reflect a feeling that more pride in the appearance of the buildings would be generated by the improvements.

### Question 3: Rank the following from 1 – 5 most positive things about the proposals? 1 = most positive 5 = least

The intention for this question was that each of the answers would receive a rank and therefore provide a score for each answer, the lower the score the more positive aspect of the proposal. Unfortunately the responses varied greatly and there was little consistency in the answering methodology. Some answers received no score, others were ticked, some were answered 'yes' and some were left blank.

In order to analyse this data the numerical scores for each answer were totalled. These numbers were then divided by the number of responses which that particular answer received to give an average score on the scale of 1-5. This was then inverted by subtracting the resulting answer from 5 and the following table shows the results with the highest number representing the most positive response.



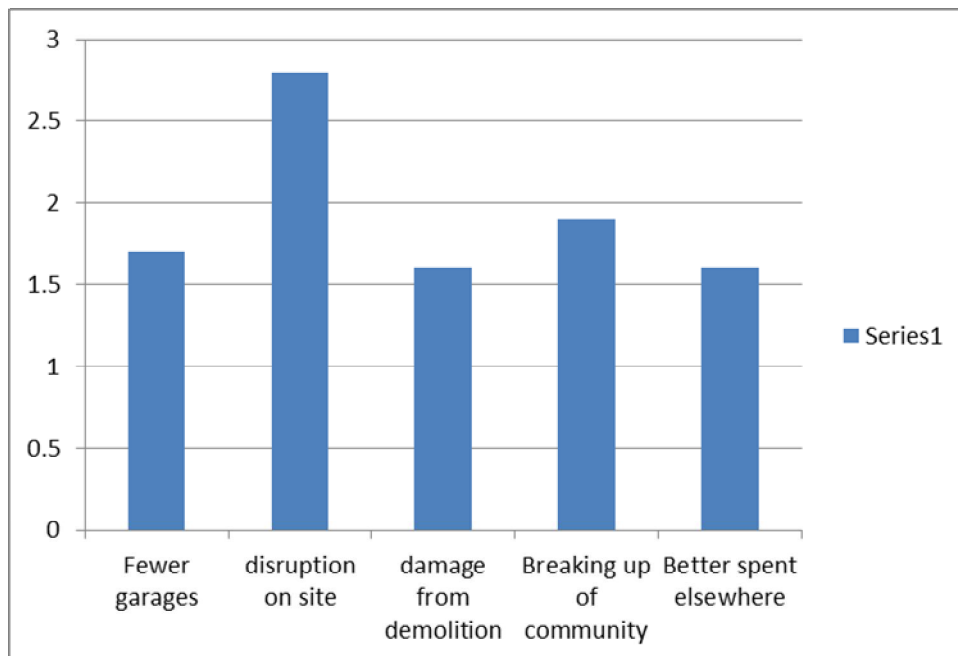
#### Outcomes

- The variation between the scores of each element is not great with all falling between 2 and 3.4. This may be an indication of the inconsistency of answering methodology or simply a reflection of the differing priorities of the responses. Either way no individual scores stand out as high or low.
- Bearing the above in mind the two highest scores relate to the physical aspects of the buildings rather than the external areas or the estate at large.



## Question 4: Rank the following from 1 – 5 biggest concerns about the proposals? 1 = most important 5 = least

As with question 3 above, the variety of answers received was very great and so the same methodology for displaying the answers was applied. The table below shows the results with the higher scores indicating the greater level of concern.



### Outcomes

- The biggest concern of the respondents is the disruption on site. The project is likely to be on site for up to 2 years, during which there will be a variety of activities taking place. Some of these such as the demolition of the flats and the installation of the new gas main will require substantial disruption to the surrounding area. This may include re-routing of pedestrian and vehicle access, noise and dust. Careful consideration will be required at an early stage to try to keep disruption to a minimum.
- The variation between the majority of scores is not great with most falling between 1.6 and 1.9. This may be an indication of the inconsistency of answering methodology or simply a reflection of the differing priorities of the responses.

## **Question 5: What could make the revival scheme better?**

As a narrative response was invited for this question, a variety of answers were received but two ideas were repeated several times throughout the responses.

The first was that the existing tenants should be offered a chance to return to the refurbished or new homes upon completion of the project. This is an opinion which has been expressed throughout the consultation process by phone, in person and in writing. The trend over recent years has been towards transient tenancies on Beechtrees with the majority of tenants moving on within 2 years. There are, however a core of tenants who have been in place for many years and wish to remain in the vicinity. Due to the duration of the works, it may not be practical to action this suggestion as tenants would have to move twice in the space of 2 years and would also not be eligible for a home loss payment. In addition the change in nature of the housing may mean that some existing tenants may not be eligible for some of the new homes.

The second recurring suggestion was that the scope of the refurbishment could be widened to include other properties in the area. Houses on Beechtrees and many of the surrounding areas have been included on recent programmed works contracts including provision of kitchens and bathrooms (scheduled during 2016-17 on Beechtrees) replacement windows and installation of gas boilers to replace electric heating. The proposed refurbishment of the flats in the revival area would go beyond this and improve the external appearance greatly. The amount of owner occupiers on Beechtrees would make any wider revival scheme logistically complicated but it could be considered in the future should funding become available.

## **Question 6: Can you suggest any other ways Beechtrees could be revived?**

As with the previous question, the responses to this question can only be meaningfully expressed as themes rather than specific answers.

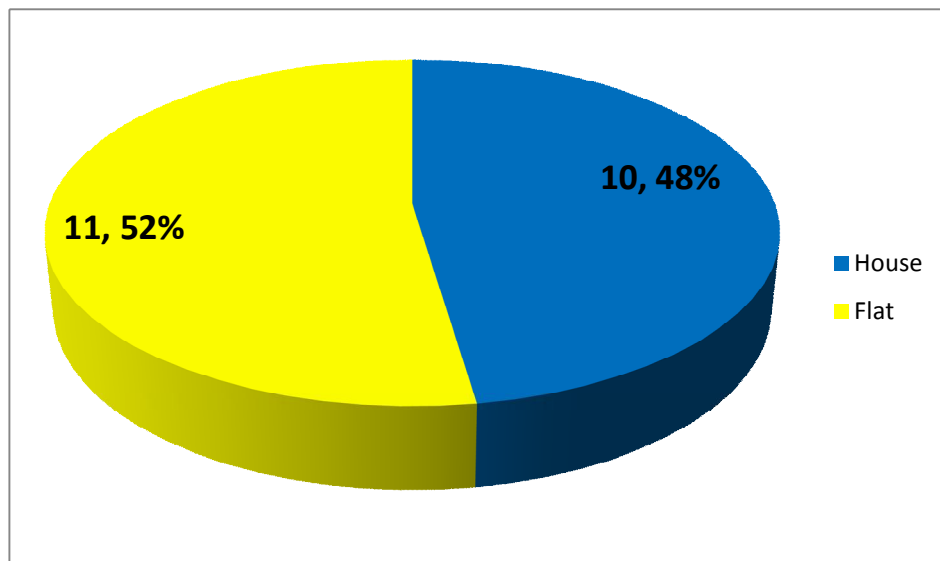
In this case, the main theme was improvements to the landscaping and external areas throughout the scheme and the area generally. Suggestions included the provision of more childrens play areas, replacement of fencing throughout the estate, more soft landscaping and more frequent street cleansing.

Many of these issues will be addressed when the detailed design of the landscaping around the scheme is finalised. Some details were received from the architect as part of the original submission but are currently in sketch form.

## 5. Demographics

This section of the questionnaire deals with the respondents themselves to help demonstrate how indicative of the general population the answers may be.

### Do you live in a house or a flat?



### Outcomes

- As the pie chart shows, just over half of the responses received were from residents of the flats. As flats make up roughly 20% of the total residences of Beechtrees this indicates a much higher relative proportion of residents of flats than houses responded to the questionnaire. This reflects the fact that the people directly affected by the revival scheme are overwhelmingly residents of flats.

## How long have you lived here?

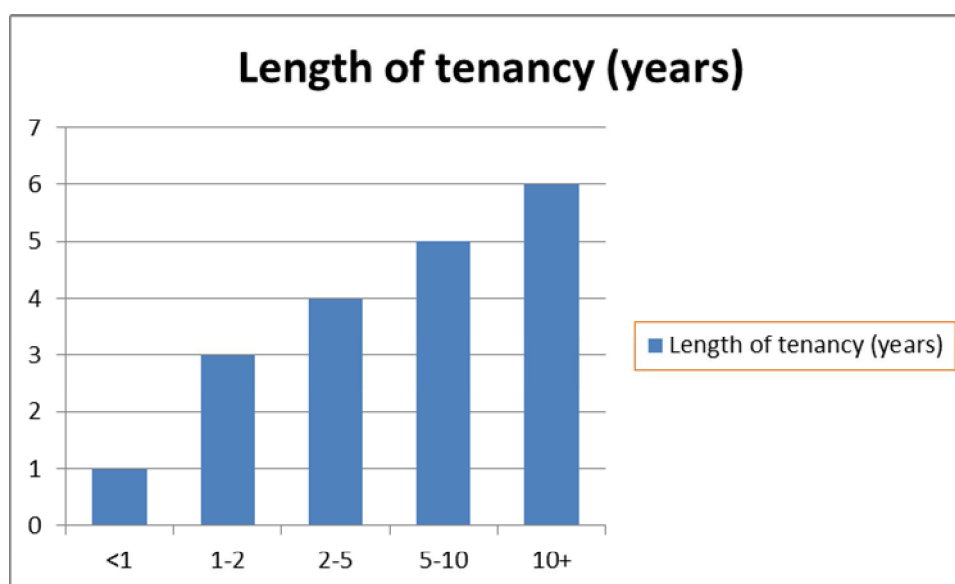
The table below shows the results of the tenant survey carried out in 2013 before the plans for the revival area were announced.

It shows the previously demonstrated trend of short tenancies that the revival scheme was designed to combat.

<b>How long have you lived here?</b>	
<b>Lowest answer received</b>	4 Months
<b>Highest answer received</b>	312 Months
<b>Mean result</b>	59 Months
<b>Median result</b>	30 Months
<b>Modal result</b>	12 Months
<b>Mean result disregarding highest and lowest answers</b>	43 Months
<b>Percentage of answers 36 months or below</b>	64%
<b>Percentage of answers 72 months and below</b>	82%

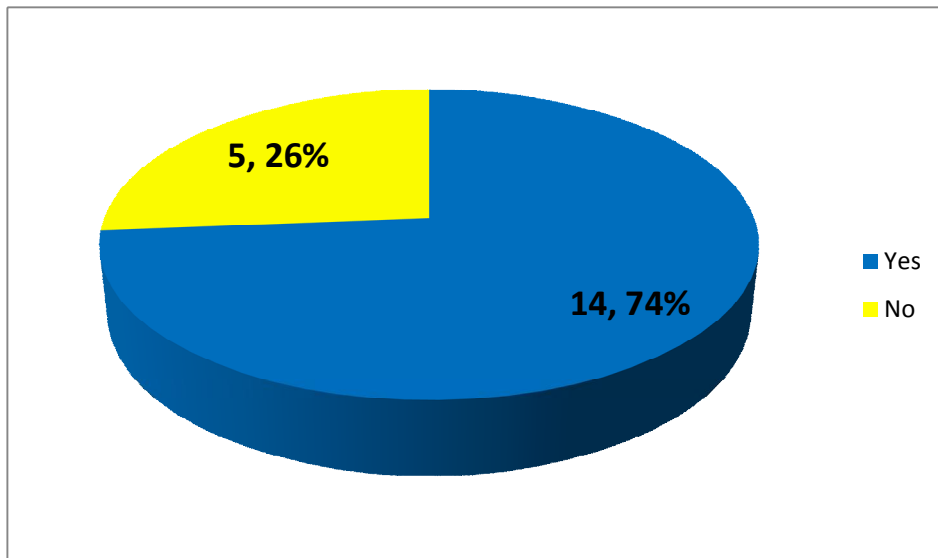
By comparison, the results received from this survey indicate that many of the people who responded to this questionnaire had been resident longer than those who responded to the first survey.

The graph below shows clearly that more responses were received from residents who had lived on Beechtrees for longer. This may further indicate the core of long term residents wishing to actively participate in the revival of the area.



## Do you like living in Beechtrees?

A simple yes or no answer was invited for this question to make it easier to interpret the responses.

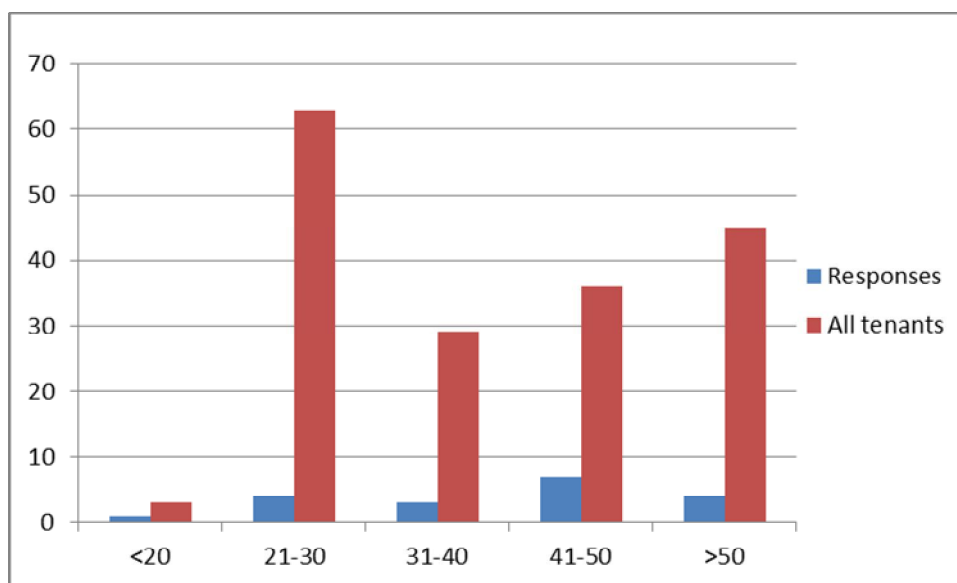


As the chart shows, the majority of people who responded to this survey like living in the area. This further reinforces the positive response received to question 1 and shows that there are merits to living on Beechtrees which would be built upon with the execution of the revival scheme.

## How old are you?

In order to assess how indicative the responses were of the Beechtrees flats at large, the results are shown in comparison to the ages of all of the tenants of Beechtrees. Although the questionnaire was sent to both tenants and homeowners on Beechtrees, and the online questionnaire was open to anybody to fill in, the vast majority of responses appear to have come from the tenants directly affected by the revival scheme as demonstrated in section 3. The data used for comparison in the chart below is based on the 176 registered council tenants on Beechtrees at the time of this report. This represents roughly 75% of the population of Beechtrees which should provide a useful comparison.

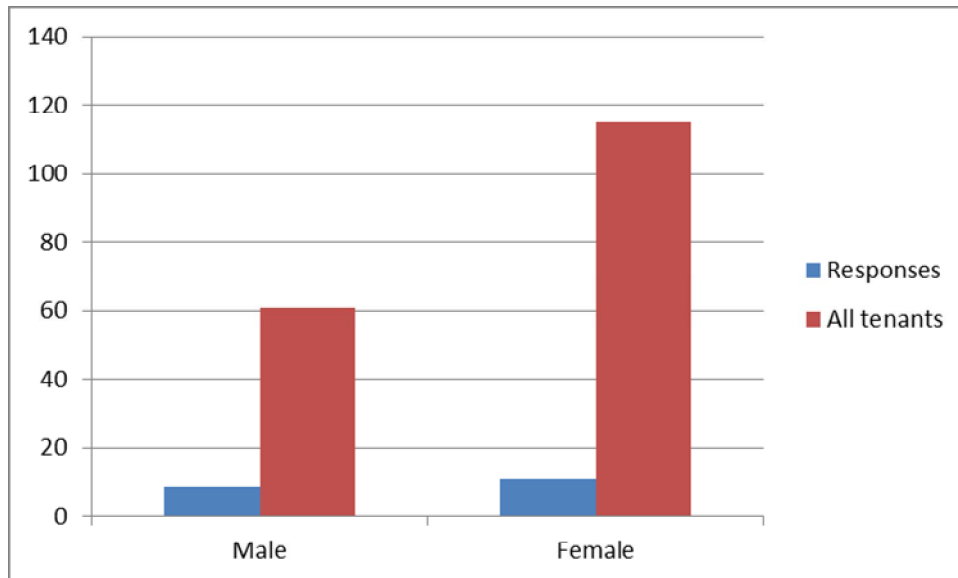
The table below shows the results.



- 5% of the respondents were aged 20 or under whereas the tenants in this category make up 2% of the total.
- 21% of the respondents were aged 21-30 whereas tenants in this category make up 36% of the total.
- 16% of the respondents were aged 31-40 whereas tenants in this category make up 16% of the total.
- 37% of the respondents were aged 41-50 whereas tenants in this category make up 20% of the total.
- 21% of the respondents were aged over 50 whereas tenants in this category make up 26% of the total.
- The most proportionately represented age range was 41-50. The least proportionately represented age range was 21-30 which is also the largest category.
- Due to the very few tenants in the 20 or under category, the responses could be considered statistically insignificant.

## Are you male or female?

As with the previous question, the table below shows the results from the questionnaire responses compared to the overall figures for the Beechtrees tenants.



- Male respondents make up 45% of the responses received while male tenants make up 35% of all of the tenants Beechtrees.
- Female respondents make up 55% of the responses received while female tenants make up 65% of all tenants in Beechtrees flats.
- The data used for this information comes from the rent account names and does not taken into account other members of a household who may be living there.
- Male residents make up roughly 70% of the tenants in the flats on Beechtrees which would be directly affected by the revival scheme. This would explain the apparent higher proportion of male respondents.

## 6. Consultation event and other forms of consultation.

**This section provides an overview of the other forms of consultation, the responses received and the outcomes achieved.**

As stated in section 3, a dedicated phone number, email address and consultation web page were set up in order to make it as easy as possible for any interested parties to have their say. There were several phone enquiries but the email address was not used at all.

The consultation event was used as both a way to answer queries regarding the scheme and a forum to discuss ideas and suggestions. Below are the suggestions received in bullet point form. The issues covered vary and many were repeated throughout the day. For ease of illustration the suggestions are grouped into 3 main categories: 1. Tenant relocation issues. 2. Suggestions for improving the revival scheme. 3. Existing problems which will need to be addressed.

### 1. Tenant relocation issues.

- Higher home loss payments for tenants who had been resident for more than 5 years.
- Offer temporary accommodation during the refurbishment works and return existing tenants to flats.
- Production of a new information pack to explain to tenants who have to move out what their options are.
- Could the works be organised so that the tenants did not have to move out?
- A further consultation event when the plans are finalised. This point was raised by several people.
- Could tenants who have to move out be assisted in finding private rented accommodation?
- Could houses for tenants displaced from Beechtrees be redecorated before moving in.
- Could the new and refurbished houses and flats be reserved for previous tenants of Beechtrees? This point was raised by several people.
- Alerts for tenants regarding new properties available for them to move into.
- Could single bedroom flats which become available be reserved for tenants who have to move out of existing single bedroom flats.



## **2. Suggestions for improving the revival scheme.**

- Could roof lights be added instead of new windows to the communal areas.
- Include a review and refurbishment of foul drainage in the area as part of the scheme.
- Extend kitchens to incorporate previous balcony area.
- Widen flat entrance doors to flats to make it easier to move furniture in.
- Ramps and level access thresholds should be included to the refurbished flats.
- Could CCTV cameras be added to cover the area?
- Steel gates with fob access for security to all blocks.
- Separate children's play areas away from flats.
- Add drying spaces to each block of flats.
- Could the storage areas in the communal areas be retained as there is not enough storage space in the flats?

## **3. Existing problems which will need to be addressed.**

- Surface water drainage and ground movement cause existing problems. Could they be investigated as part of the revival.
- Some tenants are concerned about the fire safety measures in the existing blocks. Could this be upgraded as part of the revival.
- There are ongoing problems with the separation of the landlords electric supply from that of the bedsits.
- Could the houses on Beechtrees be upgraded to match the flats?

## 7. Summary of findings.

**This section includes a brief summary of the findings following the consultation**

The number of responses we had through our various consultation channels was disappointing, with a total of only 24 responses out of 227, which equates to 10.6%.

However, the majority of returns received were from people directly affected by the revival scheme with the largest contingent being tenants who would need to move if the scheme goes ahead in its current form.

Proposals were generally well received with only 2 people disagreeing with the revival scheme in principal.

Some tenants expressed concerns regarding inability to move back once the revival is completed. The revival scheme is currently scheduled to be a 3 year project and it is the view of officers that during this time the majority of tenants would have re-settled in their new home, in addition, home loss payments would be on the basis of permanent displacement.

Limited concerns were expressed regarding the eligibility criteria for home loss payments and one tenant suggested tiered payments depending on the length of tenancies. The proposals are currently based on the statutory minimum payment, plus reasonable expenses if tenants meet the eligibility criteria of 1 year residence.

Some useful suggestions for improving the scheme were made during the consultation which will be considered when the project details are refined and developed.

## Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

**This is an anonymous survey to obtain the views of Beechtrees residents on the upcoming Revival scheme proposals.**

1. Do you agree with the Beechtrees revival scheme?  
(please choose which best represents your opinion and tick the box below)

Yes it is needed	No strong feelings either way	No, I don't think it will be very effective
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2. What affect do you think the revival scheme will have on the following problems:

**Make it better                      No effect                      Make it**

**worse**

	Make it better	No effect	Make it worse
Vandalism			
Graffiti			
Litter			
Neighbour disputes			
Security			
Dog fouling			
People damaging your property			
Drunk or rowdy behaviour			
Disruptive children/teenagers			
Lack of car parking			

3. Please rank the following from 1 – 5 which you think are the most positive things about the proposals? 1 being the most positive 5 being the least

The appearance of the buildings when finished	
Better outside space	
Better parking facilities	
Better quality homes for council tenants	
Better security	

4. Please rank the following from 1 – 5 which are your biggest concerns about the proposals? 1 being the most important and 5 being the least

Fewer garages	
The disruption while the building works are on site	
Concerns about damage from the demolition	
Breaking up of the community as people have to move out	
Money could be better spent elsewhere	

5. What could make the revival scheme better?

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6. Can you suggest any other ways Beechtrees could be revived?

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ABOUT YOU:

Do you live in (please tick)

A house	A flat
Address (optional)	Address (optional)

<1 year    1-2 years    2-5 years    5-10 years    >10years

How long have you lived on Beechtrees

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Do you like living in Beechtrees?

Yes	No
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How old are you?

<20	20-30	30-40	40-50	>50

Are you?

Female	Male
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