

# Case study: Leathermarket Joint Management Board

This case study outlines how Leathermarket Joint Management Board, a tenant-led organisation, conducted its own new housing project within one of its housing estates, involving the community in the design of new homes.

**Project name:** Community-led redevelopment of Kipling Estate garages,  
**Location:** Leathermarket, Southwark, London  
**Organisations involved:**  
**Lead organisation:** Leathermarket Joint Management Board/ Leathermarket Community Benefit Society,  
**Local authority:** Southwark Council  
**Development partner:** igloo  
**Architect:** Bell Phillips Architects

## The opportunity

Leathermarket Joint Management Board, Southwark's biggest Tenant Management Organisation, is leading a project to design and develop 27 new flats and maisonettes for social rent on a disused garage site on the Kipling Estate. It has set up a new body – Leathermarket Community Benefit Society – to lead the project and look more widely at opportunities to create more homes and improve the quality of existing neighbourhoods. Through working closely with Southwark Council, it has been agreed that the site will be transferred on a long lease to the Community Benefit Society so that they can lead the project as a client responsible for building the new homes and maintaining them in the future.

## Top tips

- Take time to discuss the benefits of new housing and the opportunities it brings to encourage genuine community support before committing to your project.
- Involve people in the design process early on, ideally starting with a blank piece of paper.
- Good design needs to involve a wide range of people, including residents and professionals – architects, landscape architects, developers and surveyors – who bring different knowledge. This is particularly important for challenging infill sites.



Prospective residents on a site visit to Bell Phillips Architects completed development © Leathermarket Joint Management Board



## What they did

The Leathermarket Joint Management Board began with a 'Better Fit' dialogue with residents about their homes and how well their living space suited them. It identified that a substantial number of people wanted to be transferred to more appropriate homes, in particular older members of the community who wanted to downsize. This would free up bigger homes for families. The Board's Affordable Housing Group also conducted a questionnaire with its residents about new housing which found that eighty-five percent of people were supportive of building more social housing on the estate's underused land. As a result of this research, the Greater London Authority agreed to help fund some early work to test the feasibility of developing such a site for new homes to meet local needs; an underutilised garage site in the Kipling Estate seemed an ideal location to consider.

Igloo, the selected development partner, became involved early on in the project to help with the practical aspects of funding, planning and designing a new development.

Bell Phillips Architects were appointed by Leathermarket Community Benefit Society to work collaboratively with local residents from the outset. The design process began with a discussion on the benefits of new developments and a blank sheet of paper; the final design brief was written in response to feedback gathered at events and workshops to ensure the thoughts, ideas and concerns of the community and future residents were met.

Working from this initial brief Bell Phillips Architects and igloo have worked in close collaboration with residents shaping and moulding the design from first principles through to detailed design, through a number of workshops undertaken over more than a year.

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**“I hope this scheme is approved and inspires other developments in my community”**

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These ongoing workshops initially used large-scale models to explore alternative massing options, before gradually moving through to more detailed workshops with new residents to explore flat layouts, finishes and specific requirements.

The care taken in involving residents has resulted in extraordinary local support for the development, including feedback such as this from one of the Kipling Estate residents:

*“Very exciting to see what's possible when estate residents feel empowered to make these new homes happen, to be part of the process of building new homes there has been so much trouble taken by the Community Benefit Society and the architects to make this a full community enterprise that will have a good result. I think the final design will enhance the estate and also feel sure that people living in the new homes will have a very good quality environment. I hope this scheme is approved and inspires other developments in my community.”*

*“I love everything about this beautiful building. Proud to be involved. I can't wait for the building to be completed.”*

Involving new tenants in the design of the building from the start and providing the opportunity to choose the finishes for their individual flats has given incoming tenants a greater sense of ownership in their new homes.

## What happens next?

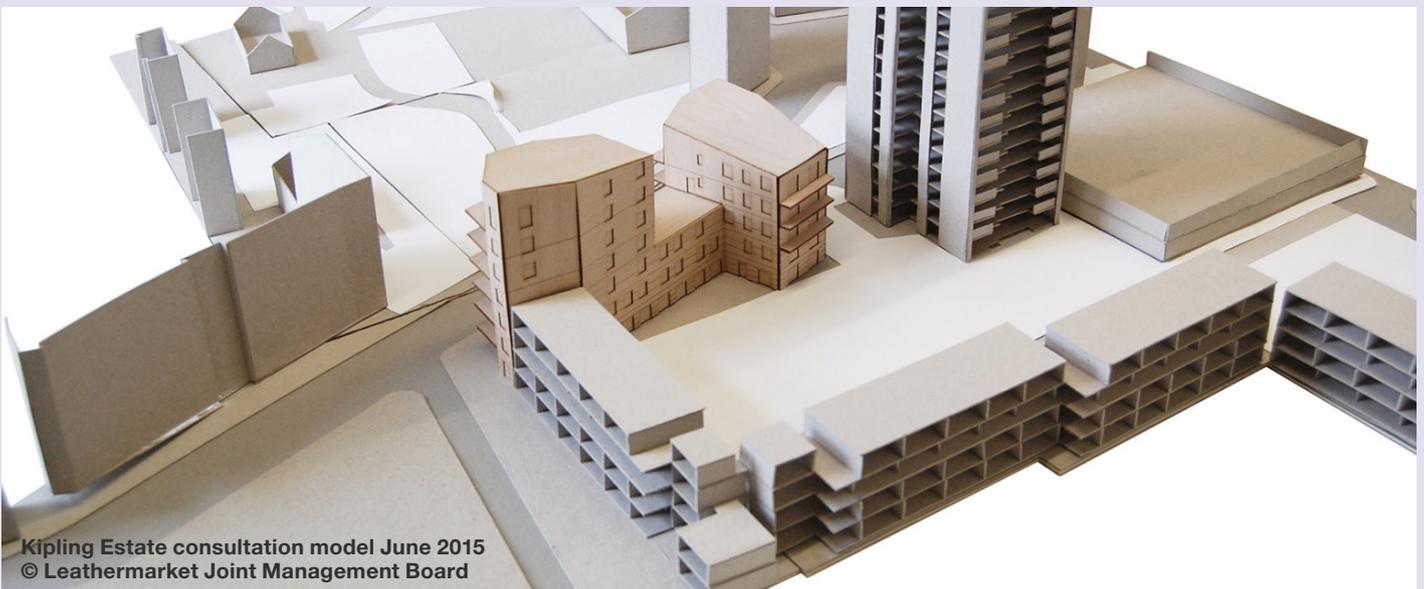
Some key messages from residents included the importance of a welcoming environment, instilling community spirit and allowing space for people to bring their own personal touch to their homes. In response, the design of the 27 flats includes:

- bigger communal entrance spaces with seating where people can stop and meet each other
- a communal garden for residents of the maisonettes to interact
- a communal roof terrace for all residents
- space next to front doors for people to personalise
- Large private balconies.

A planning application for Kipling Estate Garages was submitted on 1 July 2015.

## Challenges

- Design constraints. Small infill sites, such as the Kipling garages, are challenging to design as they are often restrictive and of an irregular shape.
- Maintaining motivation. It was challenging to maintain tenants motivations during a long design and development process.
- Limited design experience. The Community Benefit Society had to learn and acquire new knowledge quickly as it had no previous experience or skills in design or development.
- Allocation policy. The mandate from the community was that these new homes were to meet the needs of local residents. Due to the current Council standard of 50% local allocation for new homes, there was a long negotiation with the Council to agree on an exception to the policy that allowed all of these homes to be allocated locally.



Kipling Estate consultation model June 2015  
© Leathermarket Joint Management Board



## Solutions and lessons learned

- Communication and trust. Local people supported the scheme for two main reasons; firstly they had been consulted early on in the project and recognised the need for new social housing for local people. Secondly, the Joint Management Board is an organisation that tenants trust, and who will continue to manage the properties once they are completed.
- Good relationships. The success of this project has been borne out of good relationships between the Council, the Joint Management Board and the residents. This level of trust has taken many years to develop.
- Identifying and understanding. The ‘Better Fit’ programme was important in identifying and understanding local needs and demonstrated to Southwark Council that if tenants for the new buildings came from within the estate, this would then release existing properties for letting through the Council’s waiting list.
- Resident-led organisations. The benefit to Southwark Council of the Community Benefit Society leading the development is that it unlocks difficult sites that would not otherwise be developed. It can also work closely with residents in a way that it would be hard for the Council to do itself.