

**Subject: Grave Concerns Regarding Consultation Process and the Omission of Public Participation Principles in the Draft Ladywood Resident and Community Charter (160924)**

Dear Helen and Colette,

I am writing to formally raise several concerns regarding the consultation process for the Ladywood Resident and Community Charter, based on both my personal experience and feedback from the local community.

First, I have attached images (Attachment 1) of the materials presented to residents during the most recent workshops. These materials were provided without prior context or preparation, making meaningful engagement difficult. Unfortunately, there is little to no difference between the materials presented at the workshops and the current draft document (Attachment 2). This strongly suggests that the feedback provided by residents has not been adequately considered or incorporated and could also indicate a hidden agenda. To build trust and transparency, it would be highly beneficial to make public and share with the community the information gathered from residents, which was documented on large foolscap sheets during the most recent workshops.

Additionally, I wish to highlight serious concerns about the draft charter, particularly regarding the omission of the five public participation principles, which are crucial for effective community engagement. Upon reviewing pages 6 to 8 of the draft charter and comparing them with pages 8 to 11 of the *Powered by People* document (Attachment 3), there are significant discrepancies. These raise questions about whether the charter truly aligns with the needs of Ladywood residents and whether Birmingham City Council is adhering to its own policy and procedural commitments. It is also unclear why the current survey includes a question asking residents if they agree with *Powered by People*, particularly as this is BCC policy and was approved by Cabinet. The impression given in the survey that the "Six Types of Public Participation" (*Powered by People*) are principles is inaccurate and worryingly misleading. Moreover, the draft charter's presentation of "Reset, Reshape, and Restart" as "key values" is incorrect. These are not values but guiding steps intended to rebuild relationships and trust.

**Omission and Misinterpretation of Public Participation Principles**

Birmingham City Council's *Powered by People* document outlines five fundamental public participation principles, designed to ensure meaningful, transparent, and inclusive engagement. These principles are:

1. ***We will be inclusive, accessible, and fair.***
2. ***We will be respectful.***
3. ***We will act openly, honestly, and with integrity.***
4. ***We will collaborate.***
5. ***We will shift power to communities.***

These principles form the foundation of the Council's approach to public engagement across the city. However, their omission from the Draft Ladywood Resident and Community Charter is both concerning and misleading. Excluding these critical elements risks alienating the community it seeks to engage, particularly undermining the values of inclusivity, fairness, and the transfer of power to Ladywood residents—key aspects of any regeneration effort. It is imperative that Birmingham City Council maintains its city-wide public engagement standards and ensures these principles are reflected in all regeneration-related documents, including the Ladywood Resident and Community Charter.

Moreover, the draft charter misrepresents the six types of public participation outlined in *Powered by People*—Converse, Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower—by referring to them as "our six participation principles." This misinterpretation confuses the distinction between the principles, which are the ethical foundation guiding how engagement is conducted, and the participation types, which represent the methods or stages of engagement. Such confusion risks diluting the Council's commitment to values-based public participation. To prevent this, the charter must be revised to ensure clarity and consistency with the established engagement framework.

Additionally, the draft assumes that residents are familiar with the *Powered by People* document, despite it not being presented during workshops. There is also no link to this critical policy within the survey, further limiting its accessibility. This oversight is particularly concerning given that 30% of Ladywood residents do not speak English as their first language. No provisions have been made to accommodate this significant portion of the population, further undermining inclusivity.

### Concerns Over the Omission of Participation Principles

The absence of the five public participation principles from the draft raises several key concerns:

- **Lack of Clear Framework:** Without these principles, the charter lacks a robust framework for effectively engaging residents.
- **Potential Misalignment:** The omission could result in initiatives that do not fully align with the community's needs or expectations.
- **Reduced Effectiveness:** The charter's ability to promote active and meaningful participation may be compromised, undermining its core purpose.

It is crucial for the Council to address these concerns to ensure the Charter reflects the values of inclusivity, transparency, and empowerment that are essential for successful community engagement.

### Clarification on "Reset, Reshape, and Restart"

The Draft Ladywood Resident and Community Charter describes "Reset, Reshape, Restart" as "key values." Please note that these are not values but rather guiding principles aimed at re-establishing relationships and trust, addressing the issues that have affected residents since the onset of the project. True core values should reflect ethical and philosophical stances, such as inclusivity, transparency, and empowerment, which are clearly laid out in *Powered by People*. Thus, it is recommended that these guiding steps be repositioned as processes to achieve the actual values clearly defined in the wider city strategy.

### Recommendation and Conclusion Review:

1. **Review Resident Feedback:** Ensure that all feedback provided by residents during the workshops is thoroughly reviewed, properly integrated, and reflected in the draft charter. The community must see that their contributions have been considered meaningfully and residents need evidence of this.
2. **Reinstate the Five Public Participation Principles:** Incorporate the five public participation principles from *Powered by People* into the draft charter to create a solid framework for engaging residents effectively. This will ensure alignment with the Council's established city-wide standards.
3. **Reclassify "Reset, Reshape, and Restart":** Correct the classification of "Reset, Reshape, and Restart" from values to guiding principles or processes, as these are not ethical or philosophical values but steps toward re-establishing relationships and trust.

4. **Standardise Terminology:** Ensure clarity and consistency by accurately defining the six participation types (*Converse, Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower*) as methods of engagement, not as principles. This will prevent confusion and uphold the integrity of the participation framework.
5. **Increase Accessibility for Non-English Speakers:** Provide clear access to essential documents like *Powered by People* in multiple languages, ensuring the 30% of Ladywood residents who do not speak English as a first language are included in the process. This step will enhance inclusivity.

As you are aware, we have several academics interested in the regeneration of Ladywood. Here is the link to external research: <https://ladywoodunite.com/2024/09/10/questions-for-the-council-consultations-and-the-community-charter/>. For your convenience, I have also attached a copy of this document (Attachment 4). We endorse these findings and invite your response.

Finally, it appears there may have been an unintentional omission, as there is no mention in the draft charter documentation that the developer will also adopt the Ladywood Resident and Community Charter. This will undoubtedly be integral to the Partnership Development Agreement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you and to see the next iteration of the *Ladywood Resident and Community Charter* with these vital concerns addressed.

Best wishes

George