

02 Expectations before moving in

% Reason
34 High
49 Reasonably high
18 Neutral
– Reasonably low
– Low

03 Actual satisfaction after moving in

% Reason
38 High
43 Reasonably high
11 Neutral
06 Reasonably low
02 Low

04 Social class

% Category
52 AB
34 C1
14 C2DE

05 Age

% Age
26 16 - 24
59 25 - 34
15 35+

06 Relationships

% Status
57 Married/living together
37 Single
06 Widowed/divorced/separated

07 Employment

% Status
89 Working full time
08 Not working
03 Working part time

08 Children living at home

% Status
13 Yes
87 No

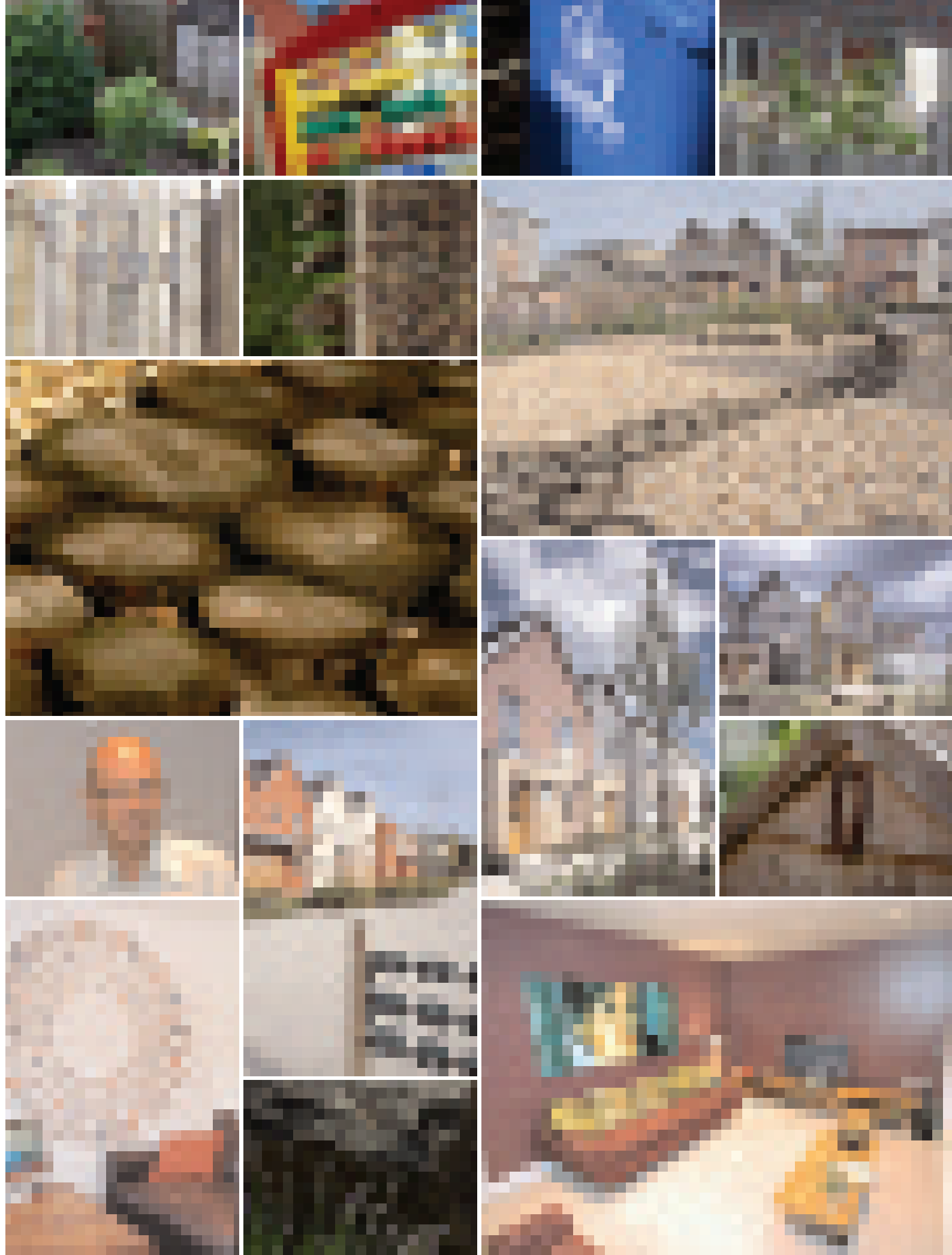
53 households interviewed out of a total of 74 (this represents 72% of households).

Did living at Staiths South Bank match up to people's expectations? ^{02/03}

For the majority of people interviewed, Staiths South Bank was as good as or better than they had expected once they actually lived there. Three quarters of people who started off neutral were more satisfied than they expected to be. Between a third and a half of people with reasonably high expectations rated Staiths South Bank as highly after living there.

Who lives at Staiths South Bank: Demographics ⁰⁴⁻⁰⁸

Houses at Staiths South Bank seem to have been bought as starter homes for young professionals. There are only a few families and only a modest reach into C2DE social groups and the over 35s. The vast majority were in their twenties and early thirties. Only one household included an older person (aged 55-64). Over half were from professional/ management classes (AB).



Design

Contemporary
Spacious
Open plan
Big windows

Thoughtful details

Courtyards, pocket-parks
Barbecues
Benches
Children's area
Close to nature feel and riverside location

Facilities

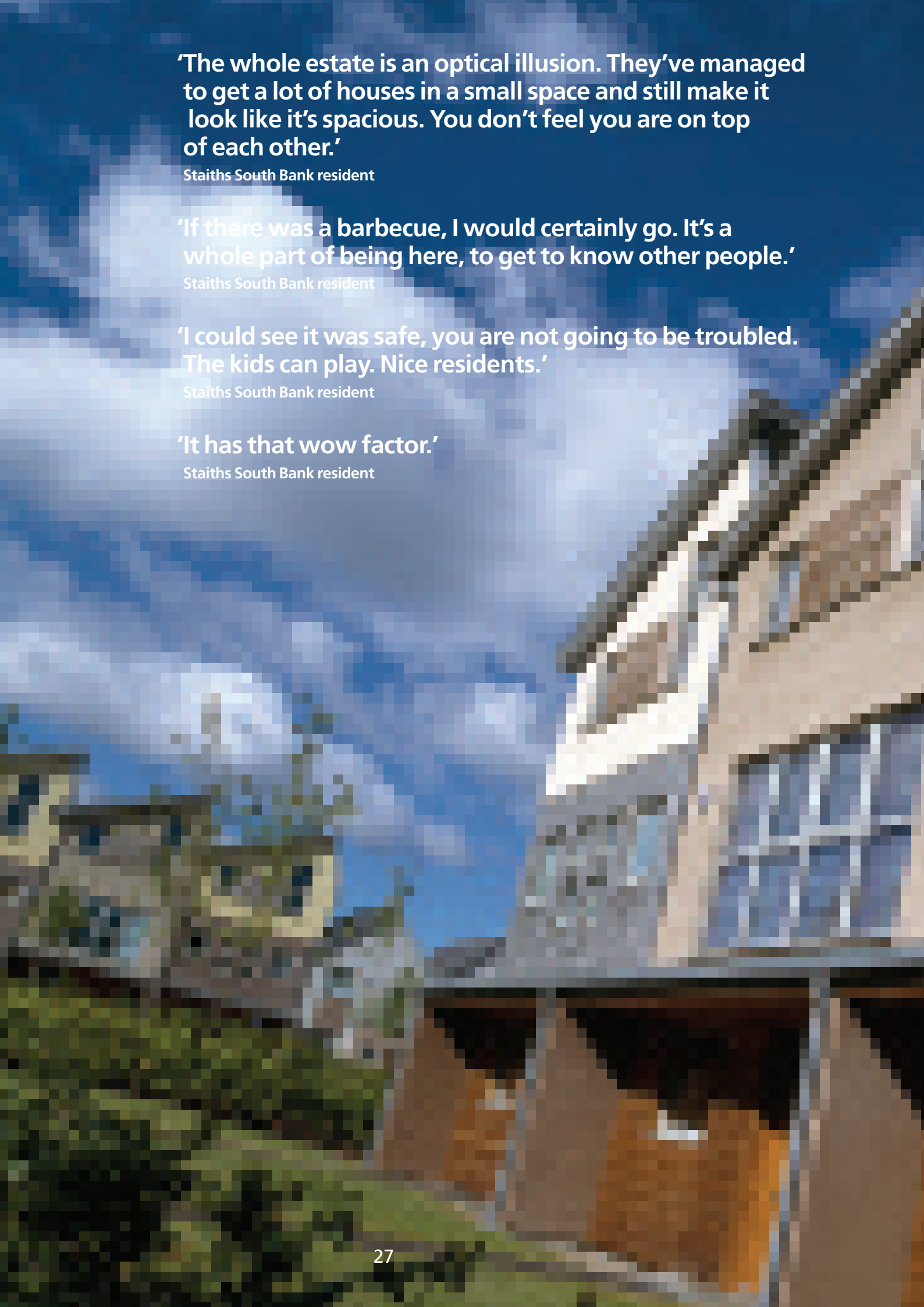
River
Bus
Metro
Communal bins

Philosophy

The detail has been thought about
Individual and different
Outdoor space
Recycling
A site with heritage
Nice neighbours

- Residents recognised that these homes would be a good investment as well as being an innovation in volume housing development. The residents were able to see what Staiths South Bank stands for and what it had set out to achieve. The residents were 'in love' with their new homes – they were idealists
- Staiths South Bank residents were buying into a lifestyle. They looked forward to coming back at night, back to what they saw as 'their own little haven'. At Staiths South Bank there is space to breathe and relax. Residents actively felt it was a privilege to be able to live there: it was qualitatively different from anywhere else
- One key strength of Staiths South Bank is that the houses are all different and therefore confer individuality – there is less need for people to mark their territory because there is so much choice built into the development overall. The houses are unusual – they are different from one another in detail yet they are in harmony. The attention to detail and good quality makes people feel valued and special. Consumers were also very aware that there is the freedom to make their homes different on the inside too, which consolidates the feeling of individuality
- Most consumers felt they had bought into a development that was individual, flexible, stylish, tranquil and spacious, with a strong community feel. There is more choice over the internal layout, including the option for reverse living – with the living room on the first floor and the bedrooms below. The pocket-parks were a big success as they encouraged people to go out into semi-private territory, giving a greater sense of space and promoting awareness of indoor/outdoor living. The outdoor areas are enhanced by seats, planting, ping-pong tables and communal barbecues – once people had met someone new over food or in the shared outside spaces, they acknowledged each other whenever they met

What did residents like?

A photograph of a residential area with houses and a blue sky. The houses are multi-story buildings with light-colored facades and dark roofs. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is a typical suburban or urban residential neighborhood.

'The whole estate is an optical illusion. They've managed to get a lot of houses in a small space and still make it look like it's spacious. You don't feel you are on top of each other.'

Staiths South Bank resident

'If there was a barbecue, I would certainly go. It's a whole part of being here, to get to know other people.'

Staiths South Bank resident

'I could see it was safe, you are not going to be troubled. The kids can play. Nice residents.'

Staiths South Bank resident

'It has that wow factor.'

Staiths South Bank resident

Design

No indoor storage
Small bedrooms
Meagre bathroom
No garages
No fireplace
Sharp stones

Local area

Gasworks smells
No local facilities
Blind spot for buses
Trouble with site maintenance
Local youth inhabiting the estate

Poor workmanship

Squeaky floors
Leaking roof
Drains flooding
Faulty letterboxes
Thin ceilings

Restrictions to the exterior

No permanent washing lines
No changing the fences
What to do about satellite dishes
Limited parking

Buying for investment

Some of the development was deserted
Empty houses

- Residents described the things they disliked as being minor problems. Inspired design has persuaded people to overlook construction flaws; but will they remain satisfied – especially once the development has been lived in for 10 years or more?
- Much hinges on continued site maintenance, for as long as planting and landscaping are impeccable, residents are likely to go along with the imposed rules for living at Staiths South Bank. But what will happen if standards fall? In our discussions, there were already some disagreements and anxieties about the off-site maintenance contractors. Some of these concerns may be relieved when the development is completed and the management committee in place to help maintain public areas
- There are rules at Staiths South Bank about what you can and can't do with your property. These include: the restrictions on the number of cars; the communal rather than individual refuse areas; limited choice on adding conservatories or extensions to the property; and no permanent washing lines other than rotary dryers. The residents were aware of these restrictions when they purchased their property and bought into the ethos of the development. However, some consumers thought there might be problems later – when people's needs changed or when the rules got more relaxed over time
- The residents particularly wanted to 'build on' to their houses and add things like a bigger shed, a conservatory, storage facilities, vegetable frames and satellite dishes. They also wanted individual fences, gates, garden furniture and washing lines. And there was lots of discussion about garage space, extra cars and visitors parking. (As a condition of the Homezone status the parking was set at 1.25 per household, which also includes visitor parking.)
- A pressing concern was that the current infrastructure in the area is poor. Schools are low achieving and there are few facilities nearby, such as a supermarket, pub, leisure or arts facilities

What did residents dislike?

**'Upstairs is just like any other estate house.
It feels less spacious than downstairs.'**

Staiths South Bank resident

**'There are a couple of girls [that hang out] round the
recycling. Bored teenagers, quite harmless really.
They don't bother you at all. They will move away.'**

Staiths South Bank resident

**'I need my car. It's part of my contract. It's a pleasant
walk to the quayside, but winter's different.'**

Staiths South Bank resident

**'I don't like the fact that you have to take your
washing line down. It gets a little petty.'**

Staiths South Bank resident

- People who were sceptical when they were interviewed in 2003, at the early stages of the project, were won over by the actual estate. In particular, they could see that Staiths South Bank had developed into a friendly, connected development with a strong sense of community
- A minority of non-residents was intrigued with the innovative unusual design – the individuality of it all. They liked the quiet, landscaped, time out atmosphere and beauty
- Some non-residents commented that if they were choosing somewhere to live now, it's likely Staiths South Bank would be considered because of its design appeal and distinctiveness. When asked about their own housing priorities they were more defensive about their choices – could they have done better at Staiths South Bank? Most said no, but after looking around the development a few were tempted by what they saw
- Some people who lived on nearby estates criticised Staiths South Bank for being too cramped on the inside and for being located in a bad area
- Many non-residents, especially people with young families, felt their needs for safety and community were better met by the cul de sac model which was found on their own estates

What were the views of non-residents?

'It's a model, not just a money-making thing. You feel it has been done for the residents. They could have squeezed in lots more houses.'

Non-resident

'You would be happy sitting outdoors or sitting at a window. Some have good views of the river. You'd be drawn outside more.'

Non-resident

'The shape, the wood, the texture, the colour. It's visually stimulating. It's very distinctive and different here. If you like style, you'd be intrigued.'

Non-resident

'If Wayne's desire was to do something innovative and affordable and different, he's achieved it. I would move here.'

Non-resident



'The parents will be screaming like banshees in a year because the rooms are too small.'

Non-resident

'A cul de sac is safe for kids. There's one way in and one way out.'

Non-resident

'It's trying to force community on everyone.'

Non-resident





01 Property price increases

Accommodation	£ 2003	£ 2005
Two bedroom	£99,995	£145,000
Three bedroom	£115,000	£165,000
Four bedroom	£169,000	£225,000



Views of 2003 group reconvened in 2005

2003

In January 2003 focus groups were convened of people living in Newcastle Gateshead planning to buy a house for less than £300K. People lived in a range of different housing. Many said that although new build housing estates were not ideal, they were often one of the most realistic options. Over a third of people had already heard about the plans for Staiths South Bank via the media.

In 2003, people remained largely unconvinced about the Hemingways' plans for Staiths South Bank. They were uncertain about the benefits of the main features around community and design. They were presented with information about the Staiths South Bank concept, including plans, press releases, marketing materials and an outline description of the development.

Can views change?

'You need a bed and to sleep and to eat. It's not important what the house looks like from the outside. That's less important than where it is and what the inside is like.'

2003

'It [Staiths South Bank] is lacking something of a focal point. It's not the barbecue. It needs a pub and a corner shop.'

2003

'There's not a great deal of thought given to them, they take shortcuts. They are small inside and they're all uniform.'

2003

'They're all uniform in fixture and fittings and just all plonked upon an estate. They all look the same.'

2003



**'I admire his [Wayne's] idealism and I hope it will work,
but I don't think it will.'**

2003

'You'd have to be the Partridge Family for it to work!'

2003

'Either that's a huge shed or they are very tiny houses.'

2003

'I never expected to be able to afford anything like this. It compares with luxury houses worth about a million. I've got the next best thing.'

Staiths South Bank resident

'It's loads better than similarly priced properties.'

Staiths South Bank resident

'Usually it's a housing estate. This is a housing community. It has a different feel.'

'I'm really impressed. They want everyone to share. I didn't think it would happen.'

'Much better than I thought. The houses are bigger. I believe it's going to work.'

'I would like to live here. I have an old house and have an aversion to new houses, but these are really interesting, spacious, on the water.'

2005

2005

Those who took part in 2003 were recontacted in 2005. A number agreed to visit Staiths South Bank and attend a follow up focus group to test whether their response changed on seeing the built development. They visited a resident's home, seeing all internal features and explored the estate, Buying at Staiths South Bank

- Prices at Staiths South Bank have risen with the market, suggesting that a home there is as good an investment as comparable properties
- Both residents and non-residents considered that Staiths South Bank development was a distinctive design and that people's needs had been considered
- Some non-residents thought that the style would date and become less appealing to the market. There were also concerns that standards of estate maintenance would decline
- Residents were more confident about the design and were pragmatic about construction flaws (problems with skirting boards, brickwork, leaks, roof noise and sewers were reported). This issue is not unique to Staiths South Bank
- Residents felt they had discovered something affordable and well designed. However, they did not credit the developer's commitment to innovation
- A number of properties had been purchased by investors leaving some parts of the development unoccupied. This issue is not unique to Staiths South Bank

Peoples' criticisms of all new build housing estates included:

- Houses were too small and cramped; too similar; felt overcrowded and were built too close together. Estates were overwhelmed by cars, garages and roads
- Staiths South Bank design responds to the site and should not be copied wholesale, although the core philosophy and successful elements could be replicated and developed
- Future new build housing estates could consider Staiths South Bank's principles of individuality, community, and the emphasis on people not cars
- Staiths South Bank was perceived as being different from the norm. People largely endorsed its principles, but they also identified some concerns

Promoting community

- Staiths South Bank is laid out to promote a sense of community. The shared facilities encouraging contact between people were seen as a great success. Amenities include pocket-parks, play areas, communal seating areas, shared rubbish bins and the barbecue. Communal facilities could be developed further on future new build housing developments.
- People identified the need to ensure that the external areas were maintained as a priority for the continuing success of the development

Cars

- At Staiths South Bank each household is restricted to one car parking space situated at a distance from their home. This was identified as a concern. Most people supported a more car-free environment, but wanted adequate parking provision



Conclusions

House design

- Staiths South Bank properties were considered distinct and individual. Some of the problems of other new build housing estates were identified, including lack of storage and small living spaces. However, the use of design was generally admired: ie, front doors, coloured panels, wooden finishes, upstairs living room and roof shapes to create unique combinations . The level of individual design could be replicated or developed further on future developments



***Social grades**

This system classifies households by the occupation of the head of each household in the following categories:

A: Higher managerial and professional

B: Intermediate managerial and professional

C1: Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial

C2: Skilled manual workers

D: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers

E: State pensioners, casual workers

Market

- Current Staiths South Bank residents are mainly identified as within the social grade AB.* This is not the normal demographic for new build housing estates and is a potential new market for house builders. Staiths South Bank raises questions about how house builders can attract a broader demographic as well as keeping their usual customers
- Occupation at Staiths South Bank also reflects a current housing problem. that's when investors buy properties and leave them empty until resale. These unoccupied houses leave gaps in the community

Regeneration role

- Staiths South Bank is built on a former industrial site, unoccupied for 14 years. The design-led philosophy has resulted in an attractive development exploiting the site's previously undervalued natural advantages
- The river frontage is a strong focus and the site has a real advantage as it is very close to Gateshead and Newcastle city centre. People believed the surrounding area had gained an 'image boost' from the publicity and attention Staiths South Bank has received. However, Staiths South Bank is quite isolated from the rest of Dunston and currently there are few facilities
- At this stage, it is not possible to make conclusions about the longer term regeneration impact of Staiths South Bank for the surrounding local area

'The usual rules don't apply here.'

Non-resident

'Has it not brought up the area? Gateshead people know where you live. It's put this place on the map.'

Non-resident

'The surrounding areas haven't got a lot of local facilities but it doesn't matter when you work in town.'

Staiths South Bank resident

Good design can mean good value

The only way to ensure that good design doesn't get totally value-engineered out is for the design team to remain with the project right until the last resident is in their new home. We realise that this is not always easy, but take your eyes off the job at your peril. We say that a bad scheme reflects as much on the designers as the house builder.

We hardly come across any women in decision-making positions

This seems a bit daft when it is generally women who care more about homes. It may be a shared purchase but women often make the decisions on how a family lives in its home. Come on house builders, employ more women at managerial level! Come on women, join the housing industry!

There's a whole new market out there

Regular research shows that only around 30% of homebuyers would consider buying a new build from a mass house builder. With the Staiths South Bank development we have proved that buyers from the remaining 70% can create a new market. It is often the case that house builders don't seem to understand this more demanding group of consumers.

New markets equal greater creative potential

House builders can be naturally fearful of open plan, upstairs living and eaves without lofts, but this new market has tastes that allow architects and designers to be more creative. As with all innovation, house builders are happiest with small steps forward.

Architects and designers should help house builders with their marketing

If designers come up with a new concept then the marketing and PR departments of house building companies need their help spreading the word by using the right language.



The Hemingways: What we've learned

Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway

Advertising and marketing can be more cost effective
Through building well-designed homes that are irresistible, house builders are unlikely to need to do their cheesy ads of Mr and Mrs Perfect sipping champagne on a balcony. Large housing schemes can have seven figure advertising budgets, so the object is to persuade them to spend the money on design instead.

Landscaping, green spaces, and gardens are obviously popular

They are also expensive, but there is an increasing body of evidence which shows house builders that investment in the public realm can produce land value benefits. CABE's document Does Money Grow on Trees supports this view.

Sourcing the goods

By getting out and visiting new suppliers, the palette of materials and the maturity of the landscaping can be massively upgraded at no extra cost to the house builder. This is time consuming but worthwhile in terms of job and customer satisfaction.

Value productive partnerships

We have learned lots from working with George Wimpey. We may criticise mass house builders but they do know how to build houses cost effectively and to make the all-important profit.

When teamwork really means teamwork

Unless the house builder's costing and sales team are present at all relevant team meetings expect a rough ride. And make sure that detailed minutes are always taken, circulated and actioned.

There is help out there

Gateshead Council has been our partner, our sounding block, and our ally. We constantly ask for help and advice from CABE and from Building for Life. There are many great websites and there are other housing schemes not a million miles away.





So get out and about

Cheap air travel to Europe means that design and marketing teams can get out and see what's happening in great housing schemes in places such as Malmö, Kronsberg, Stockholm, Leidsche Rijn and Almere.

House builders and their key objectives

Above all, remember that house builders have a duty to deliver increasing profits to shareholders. All the great design in the world can't interfere with this in the long term.

Customers really do know best

Finally, and importantly, listen to customers. They know as much as many of the people working in the industry. After all, they live in the homes. Arts Council England's research on consumer perspectives will prove invaluable in the design and planning of future phases of Staithe South Bank.



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'At Staiths South Bank you are all different but together, whereas in a normal estate you are the same but apart.'

Staiths South Bank resident

You think not having your own bin is going to be an issue, but it's not, it's better. They don't smell.

Staiths South Bank resident

I love coming home after a long day's work. It's quite peaceful, relaxing. I open up my back door on to the garden and I'm transported.

Staiths South Bank resident

