High Rise Hope

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About High Rise Hope

• Does physical investment in large, complex estates help social and community relations?
• Can high rise tower blocks create a sense of community?
• Can we ‘abolish’ fuel poverty through energy saving and retrofit?
• Can residents tolerate a year’s building work?
  – Dirt, noise, sheeting, scaffolding, delays
• Who pays for such major works? How much?
About the Edward Woods estate

- 900 flats, 530 in three 22-storey tower blocks and four medium-rise blocks and some new build housing association homes
- One of two most deprived areas of Hammersmith
- 6 years lower life expectancy on estate than in better off areas of Hammersmith
- But more people are in work than other nearby estates
  - More well qualified residents
- Almost everyone thinks the estate is safe
- Two thirds know and get on with neighbours
- Very poor living environment
  - Indoors – cold
  - Outdoors – traffic pollution
Planes, Westway flyover, West Cross Route, Shepherds Bush roundabout
A little history of Edward Woods

• Became a ‘priority estate’ in 1981
• Pioneered local estate management
• Tracked developments in
  – Property Before People, 1987
  – Running to Stand Still, 1989
  – Swimming Against the Tide, 1995
  – Turning the Tide, 2005
• An estate defended by landlords, residents and government – popular, full
• Many rounds of improvements and on-site management
Before the works
Learning about the estate from 50 tenants

- Working group meetings
- Site visits
- Home interviews
- 2/3 paid excessive energy bills, were cold
- 2/3 felt positive about the estate and over 4/5 with area
- Almost all tenants feel safe at home and in area
- Poor understanding of energy efficiency & waste
- Poor understanding of energy saving
High levels of air pollution
Local provision

Café and shops

New housing

Community centre

Green space
The works this time around

- Transform the appearance of the towers
  - Cladding
- Remedy decayed elements
  - Sprawling concrete, brick facing
- Reduce energy usage and CO$_2$ emissions
  - Insulation
- Install renewable energy
  - Solar PV
- Improve overall image of estate
  - Communal areas
  - 12 penthouse flats
  - New lighting and wiring
  - Stairwell double glazing
  - Remove electric heating, install gas
  - Office space for voluntary organisations at base of blocks
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Problems

• Long delays and contract over-runs
• Dirt and dust from building work
• Fears that cuts will reduce concierge hours
• Little understanding of energy saving
• Only 1/3 thought flat would be warmer!
Dangerous conditions
Lessons

• High rise, high density estates work with intensive on-site management
• Constant reinvestment / regeneration is essential
  – Not a one-off process
• Close liaison with residents smoothes process
• ‘Parker Morris’ space standards in flats provide popular homes
• Insulation is the only way to overcome fuel poverty – rising energy costs determine this
• Big information and education gaps
  – Even in live experiments
During the works
What works?

• 9/10 felt well informed on building
• Contractor’s resident liaison officer helped communication
• So did concierges
• And Hammersmith’s housing officers
• And on-site working groups with resident representatives
• Residents tolerated two years of disruption
  – Scaffolding
  – Restricted daylight
  – Drilling and banging
  – Building site conditions
• Because of careful ‘hand-holding’ and long-term benefits
After the works – community learning

Concierge survival?