

# Focus Group Qualitative Research

North London Waste Authority

19 November 2021

Quality information

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# 1. Introduction

The North London Waste Authority (NLWA) manages waste transportation and disposal on behalf of seven London boroughs; Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, and Waltham Forest. They also manage the recycling for six of the seven boroughs.

NLWA needed to better understand what the current views and awareness are of the residents of these boroughs in regard to existing and future waste management facilities. As a quantitative survey would only inform NLWA of a high-level view, an initial piece of qualitative research was required to give NLWA the in-depth understanding of how and why people feel the way they do.

NLWA is currently undertaking a major construction project, the 'North London Heat and Power Project' (NLHPP), that will replace the current waste recycling facility with a state-of-the-art recycling and energy recovery facility on the same site. The new facility will be much larger, and some residents in the area could be impacted by construction traffic or concerned about the volume of traffic and emissions once the facility is up and running.

## 2. Research Objectives

Qualitative research was undertaken with residents across the seven boroughs that NLWA currently govern. The objectives of the research were to:

- Understand in detail the view of recycling across the seven boroughs;
- Understand residents' views and understanding of waste management currently;
- Understand awareness of Edmonton EcoPark;
- Understand awareness of the NLHPP;
- Understand the benefits of the NLHPP on residents;
- Understand how and if residents had prior knowledge of the NLHPP; and
- Understand residents' views on the waste agenda, climate emergency and priorities for the future regarding NLWA and waste management.

## 3. Methodology

Qualitative research offers in-depth insight and value into respondents' perceptions and attitudes that cannot necessarily be obtained using quantitative research.

### 3.1 Sample Profile

In consultation with the client, the research was designed to engage with groups of residents as set out in 3.1.1 below.

#### 3.1.1 Residents' Profile

A total of 94 residents took part in the qualitative research about NLWA and the NLHPP. Table 3.1 shows the respondents' demographic profile and location.

**Table 3.1: Demographic Profiles of Residents' Groups**

Location	Social Economic Group (SEG)*	Type of Respondent
<b>Group 1: Residents from Barnet</b>	ABC1	53 female, 41 male; 29x18-34, 37x35-59, 28x60+
<b>Group 2: Residents from Barnet</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 3: Residents from Camden</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 4: Residents from Camden</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 5: Residents from Enfield</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 6: Residents from Enfield</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 7: Residents from Hackney</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 8: Residents from Hackney</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 9: Residents from Haringey</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 10: Residents from Haringey</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 11: Residents from Islington</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 12: Residents from Islington</b>	C2DE	
<b>Group 13: Residents from Waltham Forest</b>	ABC1	
<b>Group 14: Residents from Waltham Forest</b>	C2DE	

\*One criteria was to identify the Social Economic Group (SEG) of each respondent. A person's socio-economic status is based on the type of work they do, or what they used to if they are retired.

AB = Higher & Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations

C1 = Supervisory, clerical & junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations

C2 = Skilled manual occupations

DE = Semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations

### 3.2 Recruitment

AECOM appointed a specialist company, Acumen Research to recruit respondents. They were tasked to ensure a good mix of residents ensuring those who don't always take part in groups were given the opportunity to and ensuring the focus groups did not contain multiple respondents who were from activist or other groups who may have introduced bias to the groups.

All participants were screened to ensure they met the eligibility criteria for the focus group they were being recruited for. Participants were told the purpose of the research was to understand their views of NLWA and NLHPP and their awareness of them.

The groups were structured to last between 75 and 90 minutes to enable comprehensive coverage of the topics. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and constraints on staging traditional face-to-face focus groups in person, the groups were completed virtually (using Microsoft Teams). Each group comprised of six or seven participants.

All respondents were given a £50 incentive to thank them for taking part.

### 3.3 Discussion Guide

The basis of the discussions were topic guides that were developed with NLWA prior to the research being undertaken. The guides acted as an aide to the moderator to ensure all topics were covered during the focus groups and there was consistency across the focus groups. A copy of the discussion guide can be found in Appendix A. Topics in the discussion guide included:

- General awareness and recycling participation;
- Awareness of where recycling and waste goes;
- Awareness of Edmonton Eco Park;
- Awareness of the NLHPP;
- Impact of the new facilities;
- Views on turning waste into energy;
- Views on the jobs and training opportunities created by the NLHPP;
- Impact of the NLHPP on the local area;
- Impact on higher recycling rates;
- Alternatives to the NLHPP;
- Prior knowledge of the NLHPP;
- The waste agenda;
- Climate Change;
- Air quality; and
- Priorities for the future.

### 3.4 Moderation

The focus groups were facilitated by trained and experienced moderators. The moderator stimulated the discussion using their knowledge of the study topic, with the assistance of the discussion guide, taking the research objectives into consideration.

Throughout the conversations, the moderator introduced different topic areas and materials (based on the discussion guide) to promote discussion and debate. Respondents were encouraged to discuss their views within the group and not simply respond to a set of questions posed by the moderator. Respondents were asked to give reasons for their opinions and respond to others they may or may not agree with.

### 3.5 Analysis

The groups were recorded in Microsoft Teams and then converted to audio files for transcribing. Those transcripts then became the basis of the analysis in the following sections of this document.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Awareness of recycling and personal waste management

#### 4.1.1 Current recycling behaviours and attitudes

It was key to understand at the outset the different views of respondents on recycling and waste management (on a personal level). This helped the moderator to understand how much personal recycling and waste management each respondent undertook, how much they thought and cared about recycling and what they thought happened to their waste and recycling once it left their household. It was also highlighted how much previous engagement, if any, respondents had had with local councils or others regarding personal waste items or bins.

Many of the respondents had several bins to manage their personal waste. Some respondents had bins they don't use, "the brown box/ brown bin" for example was predominantly mentioned by respondents as originally for food waste. Some people paid to have additional bins when others chose not to, such as "the green bin" for garden waste. A few respondents shared that they did not have a food waste bin and were currently discarding this in their general waste, although they added that they would prefer to have a food waste bin.

*"I think in the past we did have, we did have four bins, so we had the general waste bin, the recycle, the green bin for the garden and then we had the food bin, which is the brown bin, but we no longer use it. At the moment, yeah, we do have the blue bin, the general waste bin and then like when you do the garden, so that's the green bin." (Barnet resident)*

*"We do have the same bins, but I don't have a green bin, because I totally refuse to pay extra money to have a green bin. My husband won't let me do it under any circumstances, so very anti that. I think we pay enough for our council tax for it to be included. So, we just have the normal recycling and the black bin, the brown bin I don't think we've used for quite some time." (Barnet resident)*

*"I don't actually have a food waste collection. I'm quite unusual for Hackney in that there's no food waste collection in my building. For some reason, the food waste goes into the general waste. I suspect it's due to the market [I live next to]... If there was an option, I would prefer to have a food waste bin, because I feel a bit bad putting it in with the general waste." (Hackney resident)*

Those who live in flats and only have access to communal bins for general and recycling waste tended to feel it was not easy to recycle or get rid of all waste.

*"Where we live in a block, we have got two black bins, two big black bins for twelve flats and one big green recycle bin. Now, I try and recycle as much as possible, I take the carrier bags back to Tesco and the ones that need to go to supermarkets, I take them back. Everything else goes in the green bin but we've got a problem where there's not enough bin capacity for all our recycling, so sometimes I'm left with a box full of recycling in my flat for two or three days, waiting for it to be collected. Likewise, we haven't got enough black bin capacity, so I could get to Sunday, have a full bag of rubbish, no room in the bin, have to wait for it to be emptied on Tuesday." (Waltham Forest resident)*

Some respondents stated they did not understand the purpose of some of the bins, especially as collection of them does not seem to be consistent and therefore doesn't encourage residents to use them, particularly if they are already full.

*“I don’t understand Barnet’s programme with the brown little food waste bins, because it seems very hit and miss, some people have it and some people don’t.” (Barnet resident)*

*“Yes, I think my one is a refuse bin and the food waste, they don’t pick it up, so we normally put it in the normal black bin ones.” (Barnet resident)*

Some commented about how they had experienced issues with their recycling of food waste and felt the collection of it should be more frequent than once a week, explaining that they had encountered issues with smells and flies around the waste. A few had had issues with foxes and rats being attracted to the food waste and that this deterred them from recycling their food waste.

*“If they collected [food waste] every two days, it would be better, because you should not have that in the house or even in the bins outside for long. You have foxes and the smell, the flies, so they could do more.” (Haringey resident)*

*“Whatever’s food is left in it, the foxes are quite a dab hand at opening that, so it just makes them come even more, so I’d rather just not have food waste or just put it in the bin.” (Hackney resident)*

The level of understanding towards recycling across the groups was debated; some respondents were unsure they were recycling correctly as they don’t know what can or cannot be recycled. A few were aware that certain items could only be recycled at shops or specific locations and could not be recycled by placing them in their household recycling bins. Most preferred having one mixed recycling box suggesting it was convenient and made recycling easier, but some added that they were unsure what could and could not be recycled.

*“I don’t think there’s enough information about plastics. Most of the time I have no idea which plastics I can recycle or not and whether if you put something in the recycling that isn’t recyclable, whether that means the whole lot then goes into landfill... Like clingfilm and plastic, that also it gets really confusing if you’ve got a package that’s got waste and cardboard and plastic on it. You know, it’s kind of do you then have to kind of separate them?” (Haringey resident)*

*“I bought a package, and it had the polystyrene in it, well to me I just thought that was for recycling and I put that on, like inside the recycling bin, and they actually left it with a note to say that had to go in your normal waste, because it wasn’t recyclable.” (Haringey resident)*

Some respondents questioned why some recycling rules or items were different between the boroughs and explained that they sometimes switch items with friends or colleagues in other boroughs in order to dispose of the items correctly.

*“I mean I agree, I found it difficult. I mean I’ve had to in the past use a friend, who lives in a different borough, her recycling centre, because it was so much easier to navigate through and you can take anything there. So, I’ve just asked her to come along, bring proof of address and I’ve used her recycling centre instead of the one in Walthamstow.” (Waltham Forest resident)*

A couple of respondents questioned why different boroughs have different rules, yet all the recycling goes to the same place. It made them question why the rules are even in place and residents may be less likely to follow them.

*“I had to contact Barnet during Covid-19, and the ironic thing is everything was separated in various boxes, blue and the black and then they sent a truck and all the guy did was poured the whole lot into one thing. It seemed a bit of a waste, because I’d separated it all, but at least it got rid of it.” (Barnet resident)*

Some respondents were outspoken about how they knew they should care more about recycling and try to do what is best but sometimes it not a priority for them.

*“I don’t know how many of you know about the Camden Recycling Incentive scheme, but they give you points and you fill it in every week and you say what you’ve done and after a while you get a little discount card that’s supposed to give you money off local areas and you can even win a voucher if you recycle the most, if you get the most points and you take pictures of yourself with a recycle cup and things like that and I did that for ages and actually won a voucher for recycling the most and then I sort of, you can only win one voucher and I lost interest and I’m not recycling anywhere near as much as I used to do and I feel very guilty, but not very long, not as long as I should do.” (Camden resident)*

#### 4.1.2 Bulky waste and large items

Respondents were asked what they do if they have larger items or bulky waste items that won’t fit in their bins. Some respondents stated that if they have any bulky waste, they contact the council to have it removed either for free or for a small fee depending on where you live.

*“It’s like £25, well, it depends on what it is that you’re getting rid of, so things like fridges, when I was trying to get the mattress collected, the fridges have got to be collected by someone special, I’m assuming because of the gases or whatever else or if you’ve got something that can be reused or that somebody could maybe, like second hand furniture kind of thing, then someone else comes and collects that and I think there’s so many people that no-one actually knows who’s collecting what.” (Hackney resident)*

Some reported they had found the service too slow and appointments had been scheduled weeks or months later which left them struggling for space.

*“For ages I’ve been waiting on, I’ve had so many appointments for the last month for a mattress to be collected and they say they’re going to turn up. You can’t just leave it outside either, so you have to take it out when they say they’re going to come and then they don’t come. when I go downstairs there’s like a mattress, a bed, a cot, that was like out there for weeks, even though you see their vans going past.” (Hackney resident)*

*“It’s a nightmare where I am, literally we get people that just come and dump all of their bulky items and it takes weeks to clear, the council, asking about them.” (Hackney resident)*

*“And bulky waste, where I live in a flat and don’t drive, if there’s anything bulky that I need to get rid of I have to log it with council and sometimes that can take up to six weeks for them to collect it.” (Waltham Forest resident)*

Other respondents reported leaving bulky items outside their house, then eventually it will be picked up or taken by other people, therefore removing the need for them to have it picked up or transported somewhere.

*“Everywhere, people do it all the time, they just come out at night, dump something, you’ll see it there for a couple of days and then the guys drive around in the van, pick it up and this is the mindset now and how people are getting rid of [bulky] rubbish.” (Haringey resident)*

*“If anything, I find [the bulky items] are taken before the council actually come to collect it. Where I live, people are quite happy to sort of like, oh, I can use that, sort of thing and I do the same. I’m always bringing flowerpots home that people have chucked out and things like that.” (Hackney resident)*

Many respondents across the groups had visited recycling and bulky waste hubs to take their additional waste when they needed to dispose of it. Most visit the site closest to them but one

respondent stated they had two sites close to them but they accepted different things so he would choose which one to go to by the waste he needed to dispose of.

*“I have to go to the dump in Enfield, you know, at Barrowell Green, they’ve got, disposable, you take all your building stuff, your paper, anything... You book your slot, then you go there and then can get rid of most things there.” (Enfield resident)*

*“On of the things that I find challenging in our local borough is that certain things you can take to the Gateway one in Leyton, which is quite easy to get to in the car, yet the main one on South Access Road in Walthamstow is just such a bloody pain to get to, having to go through the low traffic neighbourhood, that if there’s something specific that I need to dispose of there, I tend to go to Chingford, just because it is punitive to try and get there, but yeah, I have used the recycling centres, but they’re very different in certain things. You have to know before you go what to take there. Chingford does not take general waste. South Access Road takes everything. Gateway Access Road in Leyton doesn’t take furniture, but you have to do your research.” (Waltham Forest resident)*

A couple of respondents noted that different facilities have different rules in terms of when you can go, whether you have to make an appointment and how much waste you can take.

*“I think there’s one in Tottenham as well, Wood Green, Tottenham and Wood Green and you have to make an appointment and then you can only have a certain number of things at a time, like, I don’t know, thirty objects or something.” (Hackney resident)*

## 4.2 Awareness of where their waste goes

Most respondents did not know where their waste goes once it has been picked up. Some of these respondents said this was because they did not care or it was not important to them to know where it had gone to.

*“No idea where it goes, just want it gone to be honest.” (Barnet resident)*

*“I don’t have a clue, I just hope for the best and hope that it’s been properly disposed of, sustainably, responsibly, but maybe I’m being naive.” (Hackney resident)*

Others did wonder or question where it goes to but not enough to try and find out the information or understand where their waste is taken.

*“I think it’s great that I can put it all in one bin, and I’ve actually found it really clear, so I’ve had a leaflet through the door explaining what can go in my recycling bin and that it all needs to be washed out before you put it in there, otherwise they can’t recycle it... I’m really curious as to what they do with it.” (Haringey resident)*

Some respondents believed their waste went to landfill in the UK or transported to other countries and sent to landfill there, whilst others believed it goes to recycling sites or hubs to be processed.

*“I know that there is plenty of other countries that end up with landfill from the UK, whether that’s coming from Hackney, I have no idea. I will take a wild guess that Hackney wouldn’t even know, like as in the council wouldn’t even know. I think it definitely goes like abroad, I don’t think it stays in the UK. I think we ship it out to probably like poor countries, I’d say, like poorer countries, because it’s probably cheaper for us to get rid of it.” (Hackney resident)*

*“And I’ve seen some horrible films of like Indonesia, where they’ve had to import, for money, some of our rubbish and then it’s all been lying around in huge wastelands, so that is a fear that I have.” (Islington resident)*

*“A lot of it gets exported out of the country in containers to places like Africa and dumped on them. China take a lot, because they just need raw material.” (Enfield resident)*

*“I think the UK is one of the biggest exporters of waste in the world. I’m not sure if that’s like per capita, but I know that we like send out a lot of our waste to other countries.” (Barnet resident)*

A few noted that they thought it is incinerated, whilst others raised concerns about it ending up in the ocean.

*“I’m fairly sure that it goes to an incineration plant near Edmonton... A few years back, I did some research into it, because I was keen to know whether my recycling was actually being recycled, but [incineration] is better than going to landfill.” (Enfield resident)*

*“For example, the other day my son got a Kentucky and that was paper, but it was greased stained, but it had to go somewhere, and that must happen in an awful lot of people’s houses, it does that and after watching certain documentaries, particularly like wildlife ones and so forth, you know that some has gone into rivers, some has gone into oceans, that is really worrying that we are part of that problem. That doesn’t really sit comfortably, knowing that we’re all sort of part of that problem and what we could do to minimise that.” (Haringey resident)*

### 4.3 Responsibility for waste disposal

When asked if waste disposal is important to them, most respondents did not feel responsible for what happens to their waste once it has been collected or disposed of, with some explaining that they felt this was out of their control and not their responsibility.

*“I’m kind of doing my bit and doing what I’m told and also trying to reduce the waste, but after that, I can’t control where it goes, so I don’t think about it too much.” (Camden resident)*

*“Obviously I can take responsibility on the amount I create, that’s a personal thing, but I think once it’s collected, that responsibility, like we don’t have the means to see whether it’s being disposed of correctly, recycled correctly. Like we’re just giving the responsibility, like I said, to Hackney Council or to whoever the waste management is.” (Hackney resident)*

### 4.4 Awareness of existing site at Edmonton EcoPark

#### 4.4.1 Awareness of physical site

Unprompted, the majority of respondents were not aware of the current site at Edmonton EcoPark and this was common across the seven boroughs so distance from the site did not impact this finding. Eleven respondents out of 94 were aware. Once prompted by other respondents or the materials shown in the group, a few respondents discussed how they believed there was a facility located north of the North Circular but were unsure of its exact location or what happened at the site. A few added they had noticed smells when driving past the area or had seen what they perceived to be smoke coming from the vicinity.

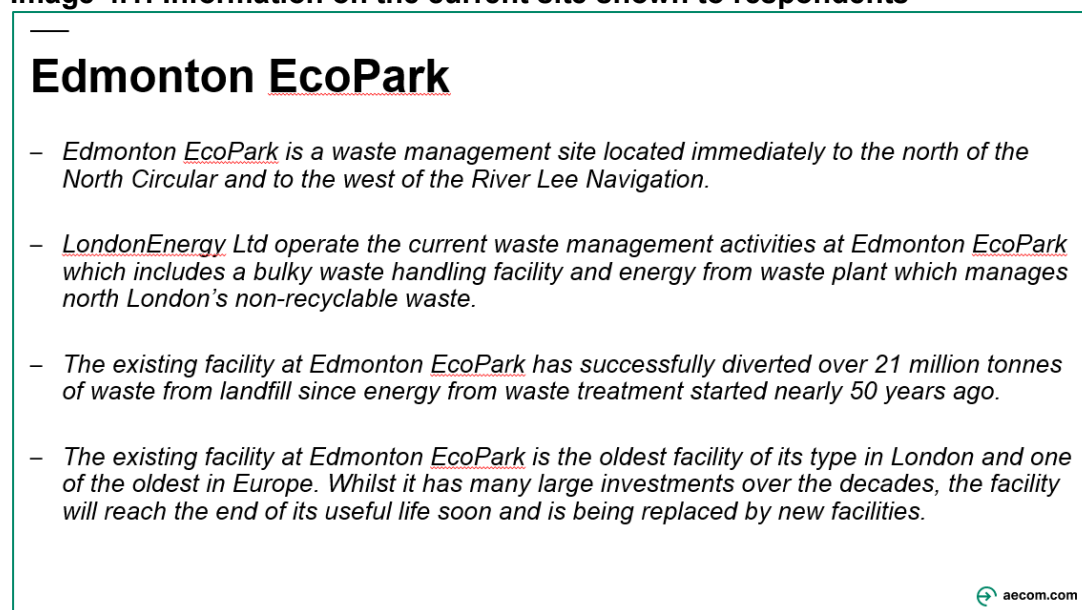
*“When I drive past, just up by Ikea, it stinks, where the seagulls are... I wind the windows up. It’s like a stagnant smell.” (Hackney resident)*

*“I just remember the last time, when I was going to Ikea, seeing a load of smoke in the air and it looked like that type of waste burning.” (Hackney resident)*

*“The sewage waste goes to somewhere near Costco in Edmonton, because I can smell it when I drive to Ikea.” (Barnet resident)*

## 4.4.2 Thoughts about the site

Image 4.1: Information on the current site shown to respondents



*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

Most respondents felt positive after hearing about the facilities at the site, and some pointed out that it has been working for many years at that location and so believed it must have been doing something right, especially as most people in the groups didn't know of its existence.

Some respondents were cautious and wanted to know more information about the existing facilities before commenting on how they felt about the site.

A couple of respondents from across the groups, questioned the use of the word "EcoPark" as this did not fit with their expectations and felt it was a strange name for a waste management facility/ site.

## 4.4.3 Thoughts on the information provided about the site

The comment in the text about "21 million tonnes" of waste received mixed reactions, with many respondents initially feeling this is a large number, but others felt that it is hard to understand how much that actually is versus the population, with some feeling that more context would help such as the amount of waste produced across all North London boroughs.

However, some also commented that anything is better than nothing and considered it to be very positive to be diverting waste from landfill, especially as it is dealing with "problematic" non-recyclable waste.

*"It's obviously doing a good job, because it's been there nearly fifty years, but 21 million tons sounds quite impressive... It's dealing with what people don't know what to do with, by the looks of it, non-recyclable waste. That seems to always be the more problematic waste." (Hackney resident)*

*"I'm feeling tentatively encouraged by it, because it's in our country and not dumping our waste somewhere else in the world, which is something which has always bothered me. The question that springs to mind is whether 21 million tons is a lot or not, I have no idea if it is, but if there's any sense of taking any of our waste and diverting it from landfill, that's very good. I had no idea we even could that, so yeah, that's positive." (Camden resident)*

#### 4.4.4 Thoughts on replacing the current facilities

A few respondents from across the groups wanted to understand more about why the facilities needed replacing and were concerned that they weren't very efficient currently.

*“Do we know what the current facility is able to kind of generate energy wise? It'd be good to have that comparison to be able to kind of clarify, you know, is this a big improvement in terms of the amount of energy that's being generated or is it just a like for like replacement?” (Hackney resident)*


*“But remember the current facility is fifty years old. What's this facility going to be like in twenty years' time?” (Enfield resident)*

#### 4.5 Awareness of the North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP)

Image 4.2: Information on the NLHPP shown to respondents

## North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP)

- The NLHPP is NLWA's plan for a new sustainable waste hub in north London at the Edmonton EcoPark. It will replace the existing facility which is reaching the end of its operational life after diverting non-recyclable waste from landfill for 50 years.
- The NLHPP will deliver:
  - an **Energy Recovery Facility (ERF)** to generate low carbon energy from waste, in the form of heat and power.
  - a **Resource Recovery Facility (RRF)** with an area to process bulky waste and prepare materials for energy recovery, including a brand-new Reuse and Recycling Centre for residents to use.
  - A new visitor and education centre on the River Lee Navigation, known as **EcoPark House**, where the local community will be able to learn more about waste management and recycling, and how to reduce the carbon impact of their waste. It will also provide a new modern home for the Edmonton Sea Cadets.

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*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

Seven respondents knew about the NLHPP. Three explained they had seen information online on Facebook, one had read about it in a local newspaper, one had become aware of it through their work, one was aware because of friend/ family member and the other respondent found out about it through helping their son with a school project about waste which included Edmonton EcoPark.

*“I did see one thing on Facebook and there's a group against it, they're called Stop the Waste Incinerator or something, I can't remember.” (Haringey resident)*

*“I was doing a sustainability project for one of my kids, and the project was where does recycling go, the waste, and I had to do that research to find out what happens to the waste, where it goes, how they sort it, the dry waste and what happens afterwards. I also came across the new project as well, the Heat and Power Project. I think that's coming in 2025.” (Haringey resident)*

*“There's a free newspaper which comes out once a month, and it's called Enfield Dispatch. It's generally distributed like outside train, our local train stations and there was an article in there about it two or three months ago. I possibly read it somewhere*

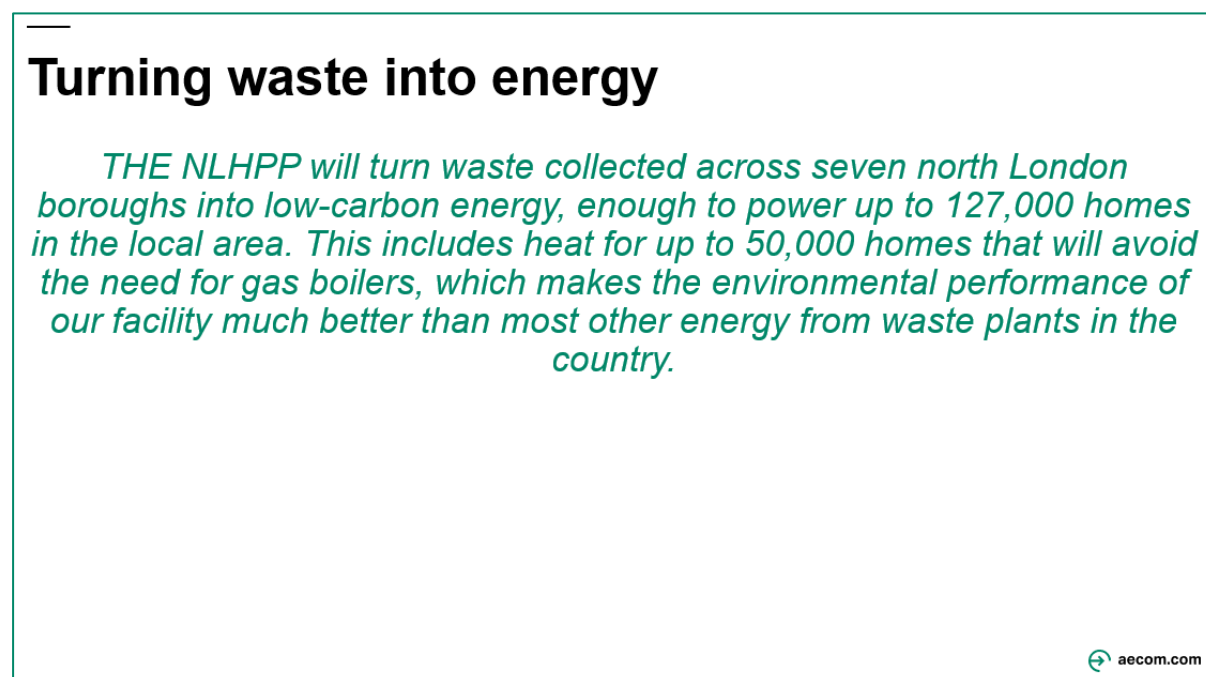
*else, there's quite a few million to upgrade it... I seem to recall that there was going to be a better recovery of recyclable bits and pieces, if you know what I mean, so a lot of things aren't being recycled the way they could be and this would have more up to date facilities to do that." (Enfield resident)*

The majority of the respondents felt positive overall about the information they were provided with in the group about the NLHPP.

## 4.6 Energy Recovery Facility

### 4.6.1 Recovering energy from waste

Image 4.3: Information on the NLHPP shown to respondents



*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

Most respondents were initially positive about creating energy from waste as they thought this was a good use of turning something bad for the environment into something better, and many added they felt it was better than sending the waste to landfill.

*"I think it's a good thing. I remember reading somewhere, I can't remember what year it is, but they actually want to ban new installations of gas boilers anyway, so we're going to have to start looking to alternative ways to, you know, generate heat and power. So, if they can take the waste and turn it into power, I think that's a good thing." (Barnet resident)*

*"I've walked past a similar facility in south London or what I presume to be a similar facility in south London. I don't know if that's the case at this one too, but the similar facility I've walked past in south London is very noisy, but at the same time, it's probably better to convert it into energy than to put it into landfill." (Hackney resident)*

However, around half of the respondents said they needed to understand more about the process so it could inform their viewpoint.

*"Because at work all our non-recyclable waste goes to be turned into ..., our service providers have a nil landfill policy and that's why we use them, frankly. So, I was aware of waste to energy, certainly. I didn't know this place was there and looking at your slide, it says where it is and that it's a current facility and an existing facility, but I'm not quite clear about what exactly is in the new facility, but I'm pretty interested, so I'm sure you'll tell us." (Hackney resident)*

## 4.6.2 Impact of the energy from waste process

Some respondents questioned the energy recovery process, asking what caused the strong smells and believed the process causes pollution. A few also said they had seen what they believed to be smoke coming from the facility, and they assumed this was harmful to air quality.

*“I feel like it’s still to me, the byproduct of burning waste in such large capacities is so detrimental to the environment, regardless of whether it’s going to energy or not. It’s still, for example, like burning plastic is so toxic. I’m sure they have filters and things like that, but there’s only so much that can be done when you’re dealing with like toxic waste.” (Camden resident)*

*“Does that mean that there’s not going to be so many fumes and pollution coming from that facility. At the moment, you can see smoke and stuff coming out of it that doesn’t really look good at all, in terms of, I don’t know, the ozone layer or whatever’s happening.” (Enfield resident)*

## 4.6.3 Using energy to impact residents

Those who felt positive about the information believed it would help with energy security and that it was a positive use of non-recyclable waste, avoiding landfill and reducing that for future generations.

*“I get the information and think it’s quite good, and I think the North London authority actually looks after about a quarter of all the waste in the UK. So, when you talk about 127,000 homes, I can’t really say how many homes are in the seven boroughs in north London. However, I think it does certainly go a long way to provide energy and security, as it were, and less need for imported energy sources. I think it’s positive and really good.” (Haringey resident)*

*“I think it’s better than nothing. I think we could be doing all this and getting nothing out of it, so to provide enough power for 127,000 homes, I think we have to see it in a positive.” (Hackney resident)*

Some felt 127,000 homes sounded like a lot, whilst others were unable to judge as they were unsure how many homes were in North London and struggled to visualise what proportion of the homes in the area that 127,000 covered. Some respondents felt it would be more useful if a comparison was given about what the existing facilities can provide.

*“Yeah, I mean the whole idea of low carbon energy and powering people’s homes, that’s good. I mean I’d like to know when they say the local area, is that going to be centred around the plant itself, because it’s easier to do or is it going to equally spread out across the local authorities who stuff goes in?” (Waltham Forest resident)*

*“The tip of an iceberg, there’s a lot more than 50,000 homes that need to be emptied in Enfield and the surrounding areas. And this is seven boroughs.” (Enfield resident)*

From the information provided, a few respondents initially assumed that 127,000 homes would receive energy for free or at reduced rates and questioned how that process would be put in place. Once realising that the 127,000 and 50,000 home references were provided to help with context rather than that many homes receiving energy for free, they said that the information needs to be clearer to prevent this confusion.

*“Enough to power up 127,000 homes, heat for 50,000, does this mean these people will not be paying for their energy or they’ll be paying a lot less for their energy?” (Enfield resident)*

*“It’s interesting that it says 127,000 homes in the local area, but it isn’t a local district thing, so what’s local about it? They’re generating energy, but what makes it local? Does it not just go back into the grid?” (Hackney resident)*

Some questioned how the NLHPP would negate the need for gas boilers and felt they needed more information to understand this. One respondent initially assumed that a district heating system was going to be set up and felt that this should be completed.

*“I don’t understand how them turning waste into power means that homes won’t need gas boilers, I don’t get that connection, because they’re going to have to heat their homes somewhere, either with electricity or gas. So, what does that mean, are they not paying for their own heating anymore, is the council paying for it? I don’t quite get that.” (Barnet resident)*

*“Yeah, definitely, why are they missing the opportunity for putting a district heating system together if they’re rebuilding somewhere like this, it seems like the perfect kind of time when you would construct a district heating system.” (Hackney resident)*

In general, overall respondents struggled to fully understand the concept and visualise the positives and benefits of this information in context.

#### 4.7 Resource Recovery Facility

Respondents felt particularly positive about the Resource Recovery Facility and having somewhere else to go with their recycling. However, some wanted more information about it, such as whether the project will have links with other charities and organisations to encourage the reuse and reclamation of items. A few respondents also wanted to know whether they would be able to donate or collect unwanted items from the site, such as furniture.

*“I’d love to see links into existing charitable projects, because I mean there are projects like the Kings Cross Furniture Project, the British Heart Foundation does some things as well where they will come and collect your furniture and make sure they make it to the right homes and things like that, useable furniture is recovered and repaired and if there could be, you know, it’s good to see things converted into energy, but I’d love to see reclamation projects in there as well, if it’s possible, because there’s so many good projects out there.” (Camden resident)*

*“What does it mean by reuse and recycle, you can take your things in and swap for other things and reuse? I’m not sure if I fully understand that. I know some countries abroad you can actually take your things in and other people can go there and collect and like furniture and things like that.” (Hackney resident)*

#### 4.8 Visitor and Education Centre

Almost all respondents gave very positive about the new Visitor and Education Centre and believed it would be particularly positive and beneficial for children and schools. Some felt it would be a popular destination for school trips and would help children to learn about the importance of reducing and managing waste effectively and sustainably. Some respondents said they would be personally interested in visiting themselves and felt other adults may be interested, whereas many felt most adults would be less interested.

*“One of my children is at primary school, and it’d be good for a school trip out, for them to educate themselves on recycling and how it’s used and how to reduce carbon and look at the environment, definitely for children. Personally, I wouldn’t go myself, but I think for the next generation, to educate them and to equip them with the knowledge that they need in terms of our environment and the world we live in and how to take better care of it, in some respects.” (Enfield resident)*

*“I think kids will probably find it interesting to see the creative part of what’s being done and how, you know, what happens at the end of the day and I think it’s also useful for the newer generations to learn those things sooner, rather than later, so when they do become adults, they’re already a lot more educated where we on this side, we’re sort of still learning.” (Haringey resident)*

## 4.9 Job and training opportunities

**Image 4.4: Information on training, apprenticeships and job opportunities shown to respondents**



*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

### 4.9.1 Skills and apprenticeship opportunities

Many respondents regarded this information as positive and felt the benefits this information brings to the area is good. Some respondents were unsure whether 100 apprenticeships and 225 skills training opportunities was a good target and asked if the opportunities will continue once the facilities are fully operational.

*“I mean that’s a positive, to be able to give a hundred apprenticeships, which obviously in turn should hopefully lead to jobs, like someone else said, it’s much better than nothing, so there are and it’s for the local community as well, so they seem to be giving back in a positive way.” (Hackney resident)*

*“I think the apprenticeships in all parts of construction can work out being a massive positive, it just depends what kind of jobs the apprenticeships will be for. Construction apprenticeships, especially in this environment we’re in now, are definitely a massive positive.” (Haringey resident)*

Many respondents questioned what constituted as the “local area” and who would have access to those job and training opportunities.

*“They’ve put it down this, it was a similar thing when they built the Olympic village, it was meant to be, but most of the people who went on the apprenticeships, the skills training and the workers on the site came from outside the areas. So, it’s are we going to benefit or is it going to be people from outside the local areas.” (Enfield resident)*

### 4.9.2 Job opportunities

Some respondents were sceptical and felt it was not clear how many permanent jobs would be created.

*“I wonder about what the quality of those jobs will be, especially in terms of pay and in terms of security, because of the, I know Barnet Council particularly basically don’t*

*really have a lot of in-house workers anymore, they outsource everything, and I know that the caveat about the local community isn't in the second sentence.” (Barnet resident)*

In addition, many respondents assumed the majority of the 2,500 jobs created would be during construction as opposed to the being for operational reasons as they felt the new facilities would be automated and questioned what the split between the two type of opportunity would be.

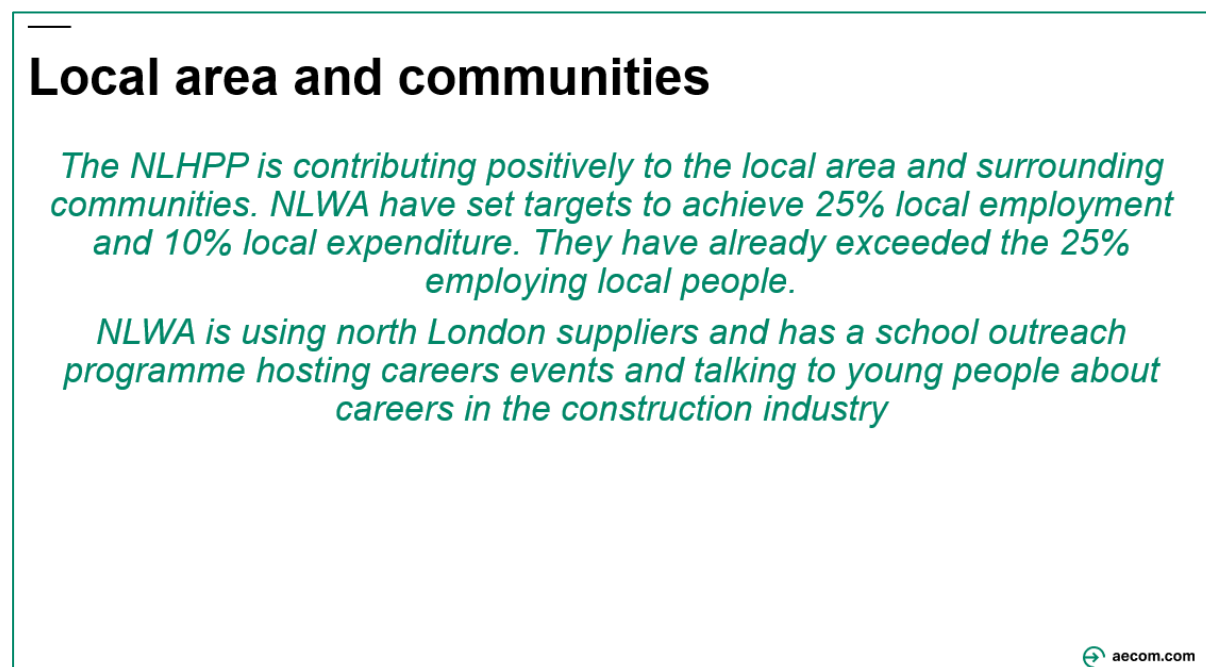
*“That’s really similar to what I was just thinking, which is I’d love to know how many of the 2,500 are construction, because surely a building firm is just going to come in and use their own people, who they always use. So, if they’re not working on this site, they’ll just be working on some other site. So, it’s a bit misleading to say it’s not really creating jobs, it’s people who are going to be working on one site or another anyway so how many of that is for the operation of the site, because if it’s only fifty, let’s say, then it’s not that amazing a thing, really, for the local community anyway.” (Barnet resident)*

When discussing these opportunities, a few respondents questioned the current workforce and how many staff are currently employed at the EcoPark and wanted to know how this will compare with the new facilities when they are fully operational. Will the new facilities have more or less people employed, and will those jobs have long-term security?

This tied in with a question around wanting to know how many of the local jobs created would be highly skilled rather than low-skilled construction jobs or zero-hour contract jobs.

#### 4.10 Contribution to the local area and community

**Image 4.5: Information on contributions to the local area and communities shown to respondents**



*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

As with the previous section on jobs and training opportunities, some respondents questioned what “local area and community” refers to.

Regarding the targets for NLWA to achieve 25% local employment, some respondents felt this was positive, whereas many considered this percentage to be low. However, a few discussed

how this may be because there are not enough people in the local area that have the required skills or qualifications to work for NLWA or on the NLHPP.

Some respondents felt there are ways and loopholes for businesses to get round some of the “red tape” and in this case, not be in the local area but be portrayed as being.

*“I was in the construction industry and I actually had a business in Glasgow, what’s part of the Olympic Village area and people got round these rules. They got like people, there’s ways round it, like in the Olympic Village, they put a load of telephone numbers out, all local people, but what it is, households took out a number of telephone numbers and people from all over the country pay the people money to use their telephone line, so they were classed as local people. So there are ways round it, so you’ve got no way of saying it’s 25% employing local people and are the local people just coming in, living in park homes or a caravan site or working and then once the work’s finished they move out again.” (Enfield resident)*

## 4.11 Higher recycling rates

**Image 4.6: Information on improving recycling rates and how the new facilities will perform shown to respondents**

### Recycling and technology

*NLHPP will support higher recycling rates across north London and is a vital part of NLWA’s sustainable waste strategy to preserve resources and protect the environment today and for future generations.*

*The NLHPP will use the latest technologies and will be one of the safest and cleanest facilities in the country. It will perform more than 60% better than the current facility in reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides – one of main emissions linked to air pollution.*

*The new facilities will save the equivalent of 215,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year compared to landfill – this is the same as taking 110,000 cars off the road.*

 aecom.com

*\*Image of slide shown during the focus groups sessions; content taken from discussion guide*

Some respondents felt positive about this information and appreciated the comparison between the existing and new facilities in terms of nitrogen oxide emissions. They felt reassured by the use of “safest and cleanest” due to common associations of such facilities being dirty and smelly, especially as this is simply how some respondents referred to the current existing facilities or how they know they were there currently.

*“This is what I would hope that they would be able to do with a newer facility. I think it’s as really positive thing, 60% better performance is huge. So I think it’s a really good positive thing.” (Hackney resident)*

However, a couple of respondents did state 60% sounds good, but it was difficult to put that into context to understand what that means. In addition, one respondent felt that meant there is still a significant amount of nitrogen oxide emissions from the new facility. Some were unsure about the information and did not think it provided enough detail about the air pollutants that are still produced and what other negative aspects are associated with the facilities, and particularly how the new facilities compared with the existing in more aspects.

*“I mean it sounds really good, but we don’t know what like the other facilities are, so like what is 60% of what, you know what I mean? So if the emissions of the other places are quite high, like 60%, it’s a substantial amount, but I wouldn’t say it’s incredible, you know, so in terms of that, yeah, it’s good-ish for me, like maybe not enough information, it’s almost more like marketing, like all of these things, what’s actually going on, you know.” (Camden resident)*

Respondents suggested comparisons with other facilities would be useful to understand why the new facilities will improve the process compared to the old site, and one respondent asked if there are any statistics about the facility that is considered to be the best either in the UK or elsewhere.

A few respondents felt knowing how many cars 215,000 tonnes of carbon translated to was helpful, but some said they still struggled to visualise what that means especially as they are not aware how many cars there are in London to be able to judge this.

*“Yes, I think you need, it’s the same as taking 100,000 cars off the road for a year or, you know, because you say it’s 215,000 emissions each year, so is that the equivalent of 100,000 cars off the road per year? That would make it a bit clearer, because the thing is yes, 215,000 tons of carbon dioxide, I just can’t picture that, it doesn’t mean anything. It sounds an awful lot. But it doesn’t mean anything to me, whereas at least the car figure gives me something I can get my head round a bit.” (Hackney resident)*

## 4.12 Alternative options to NLHPP

Many respondents felt it is best to process waste locally rather than sending further afield and incurring additional costs which would most likely be borne by the taxpayer.

*“To me that is unideal alternative, obviously. Waste being taken to landfill, that straightaway kind of, not ideal straightaway and the fact that there was going to be high green gas emissions, it’s not great for the environment again and it’ll be more money and cost, the cost effects, it’s obviously more taxpayers’ money and all that doesn’t look quite ideal to me, that’s my opinion about that anyway.” (Barnet resident)*

*“To me, it would feel criminal not to do it, like we all know now how bad things are getting, so we can’t be using solutions like sticking stuff in landfill.” (Camden resident)*

Most felt that the NLHPP was the best option from the information they had been provided with during the focus groups and felt all other options were likely to be more harmful to the environment and/ or cost more.

However, some felt the information suggested there are other options that weren’t described in the information provided, adding that whilst the targets and terms sound good, they felt there was a lack of transparency in the information provided.

*“And equally how much do we trust all of the figures that we’re given? They have a way, in all walks of life, they like to tell us, the authorities, they like to tell us what they like to tell us and present it in ways that we know we’ll like and then it turns out to be rubbish, you know, down the line. You know, all buy diesel vehicles and a few years later, oh no, don’t buy diesel vehicles.” (Barnet resident)*

*“It feels because it’s being talked about in such a kind of roundabout, indirect way, that they’re almost trying to hide what it is from people. It doesn’t kind of fill you with confidence.” (Hackney resident)*

Some were unsure of alternatives to NLHPP or whether the new facilities would be as good as presented in the information provided. It was felt the information provided was very positive and because there were very few limitations or potential negative impacts described in the information provided, respondents were less able to trust it. Respondents believed there would be some negative aspects to the new facilities and added that they felt more information would

have been shared (about the new facilities) in the media before now if it was as positive as the information suggests.

Some respondents also felt that the messaging provided was ‘manipulative’ and ‘scaremongering’, suggesting that if people disagree with the NLHPP, it will cost them more money as taxpayers (to treat waste) and damage the environment in the long-term.

#### 4.13 Raising awareness of NLHPP

Eighty-seven respondents had no prior knowledge of the NLHPP before attending the focus groups. Most felt that awareness should be raised and believed many people in north London would be interested to know about it.

*“It sounds like there’s not an awful lot of awareness about the existing facility. In the current climate, I think it’s possible that more people would be interested if they knew about it. I think the reality is that we have waste, and it has to be disposed of or something has to be done with it... I feel like [NLWA] are doing the job and okay, we can dissect the language, but at the end of the day, someone’s got to do this.” (Hackney resident)*

*“I’m really interested in what they’re doing, and I do read, you know, I have emails from Enfield Council and the leaflets that come through the door and on the whole I think I read them all and I haven’t seen anything about this.” (Enfield resident)*

However, a few respondents felt many people may not be interested in the new facilities if they are not directly impacted by them in any significant way. One respondent felt there should not be extensive marketing and awareness raising about the facilities as they expected some may take a “very aggressive negative attitude towards it” for the sake of it.

*“There’s a problem, unfortunately. If the councils aggressively market this facility, you will always get certain groups who take a very aggressive attitude towards it, almost for the sake of taking an aggressive attitude, and they’ll boycott it and cement themselves outside a facility, so I personally wouldn’t shout too loudly. If you do a lot of flag waving, you will really regret it.” (Camden resident)*

*“No, there’s been no media coverage of it, seeing as we’re one of the seven boroughs the waste goes to, etc, etc, there’s no litigation to say, oh, this is happening or this is what’s going to be going on the new site, there hasn’t been anything.” (Barnet resident)*

*“If people weren’t aware of it, they just wouldn’t really be bothered and there’s certain things that you only get bothered if it really affects you and this won’t really affect people on a day-to-day basis, as long as their rubbish is taken away and recycled, they just don’t think of anything else.” (Camden resident)*

For those who felt that more awareness should be raised about the NLHPP, the main suggestions for how to promote the facilities were social media, posters, billboards, messaging through schools and resident groups, and explaining about it in council tax statements. Some suggested leaflets and letters posted to households, but many felt that this would be going against the notion of reducing waste.

*“I personally like leaflets myself, however, this is a recycling facility to try and recycle and reduce things going to landfill, I would be, what type of message does it send to be sending out leaflets that we know is not necessarily going to be recycled on a recycling facility, waste facility.” (Enfield resident)*

*“You know when you get your council tax, and you get an explanation as to how your council tax has been spent. I think that could be a starting point to say this is what we’re doing with your money.” (Haringey resident)*

*“I think videos are quite a good way of reaching large amounts of people, through social media platforms, they don’t cost a lot to do, it doesn’t cost a lot to produce a thirty second video, which explains the whole process of how the recycling facility works or which could do that. I also think if you’ve got, you know, there are a lot of local groups, like Enfield groups on Facebook and the like, so I think if you get people sharing the video on that it’s quite a good way to generate more awareness of it.” (Enfield resident)*

*“No, there’s been no media coverage of it, seeing as we’re one of the seven boroughs the waste goes to, etc, etc, there’s no litigation to say, oh, this is happening or this is what’s going to be going on the new site, there hasn’t been anything.” (Barnet resident)*

#### **4.14 The waste agenda: the importance of environment versus cost effectiveness**

Respondents were mixed in their response to the waste agenda. Many respondents said they would want the council to prioritise what is best for the environment and future generations and would be willing to pay more if required, in their council tax for example, even though some feel it is already high.

Some respondents said they felt some middle ground would be best to avoid significant cost implications for residents in the local area.

*“I think there has to be a middle ground. I mean everyone wants a sustainable environment to live in, but if it’s going to cost us, if it’s going to rise the council tax by a ridiculous amount or whatever we have to pay, then people are already financially struggling because of the current climate.” (Camden resident)*

Other respondents said the most cost-effective solution should be pursued due to the increasing cost of living for people. Respondents felt times are difficult for some now with energy bills increasing, council tax already (being perceived to be) high, heading into winter and just generally hard times post Covid-19.

*“It’s a hard one, though, because you want to be like environmentally and you want to go that way, but you’ve also got to think about the cost of living and the cost of living at the moment is so bloody expensive. Like the council tax is just through the roof.” (Enfield resident)*

*“I think for me it’s probably cost effectiveness, like everyone, I’m sure everyone’s kind of been hit over the last kind of years, as to everything rising, everyone’s kind of living on a small budget at the moment, so say they did increase taxes and they did increase everything else, like it already has gone up, if they increase it more to try and meet this, it’s kind of pushing everyone else down. So, okay yeah, you want to save, kind of what’s to come, but at the moment if you’ve kind of got nothing to live on it kind of makes it a bit difficult to think in the long term when everyone kind of is working at the moment from week to week, as opposed to five years’ time, for example.” (Camden resident)*

One respondent added they felt local councils would generally try to choose the cheapest options and cut corners, and they didn’t agree with this strategy so felt a middle ground was needed or that the council should focus on what is best for the environment.

*“Well, to be honest I know the council’s going to go for the cheapest thing. Because they can just keep the rest of the money.” (Hackney resident)*

Some respondents felt that action needs to be taken ‘regardless of cost’ but that the cost should not be borne by the taxpayer but from allocated funding and budgets.

## 4.15 Climate emergency and air quality

A few felt the messaging for this was worded in a way to try and convince those who are opposed to the facilities, as the information came across as “scaremongering” and “bullying” to convince people to agree with the NLHPP. After reading this information one respondent assumed there was opposition to the new facilities based on the wording, discussing how the information was presented in a way to possibly try to “minimise local resistance and hatred” of the facilities.

*“The whole thing feels like a response to a major public backlash, which I’ve not seen yet, maybe there has been one more locally and we’re just not aware of it... It seems to me like if they’re already doing it, what is this for, is it just to try and minimise local resistance and hatred of it or make us feel we’re having some kind of consultation process, which I don’t think we feel we are, if they’re already doing it. It certainly isn’t inspiring and creative.” (Hackney resident)*

*“It’s a bit scaremongering, isn’t it, whereas the other [information] was a bit salesy. This is a bit, if we don’t do this, it’s going to cost you more money on your tax.” (Enfield resident)*

*“I think they should concentrate more on what the facility can do, rather than what might happen if they don’t do it. This sort of sounds like it’s some big company going if you don’t let us do this, this is what’s going to happen. It seems a bit bullying. Tell us the benefits of the new building, not what might happen if we don’t do it.” (Hackney resident)*

As with climate change, many respondents recognised the subject of air quality is very prominent now and over recent years, referring to COP26 and the ongoing changes to the London Ultra Low Emissions zone (ULEZ) boundary.

*“I think when we’re talking about COP26 in Glasgow and when we’re talking about sustainability and saving the planet, I think this is a very good start and I think this is actually a very positive note.” (Haringey resident)*

Some felt that concerns about smoke and other emissions from facilities like these were a key concern for some people, and they felt that if more people were made aware about what the smoke really is (steam and water vapour), then it would put them at ease, especially those with children and/ or with respiratory problems.

*“I did like the bit about the misconception, because I just admit I had that. It’s like somebody said earlier, you know, there’s smoke, as you said, sometimes it’s just water vapour or steam.” (Hackney resident)*

Some respondents wanted to know more about the potential risk of air pollution caused by NLHPP and felt the information provided did not clearly explain this. Respondents felt there should be more information about how emissions will be captured, controlled, and monitored.

*“I would like to know more about the process, but also the wording, capture, control and monitor. It doesn’t say like reduce or anything, like their wording, they’ve worded it very carefully. Like who’s monitoring the emissions?” (Enfield resident)*

A few respondents felt although the information claims that the facilities are the “safest and cleanest”, that may not mean much if all facilities like this are known for still having some negative impacts on the environment and those living nearby and therefore it may be better than what was there, but it still may not be good enough. Context was felt to be key and just because something is safer and cleaner than the next facility, it still depends how high the bar is set. It could still be quite poor overall. A few respondents also explained they believed there to be evidence and studies which confirmed that such facilities and incineration activities had negative impacts on the environment and public health. Consequently, they did not believe that the facilities would not pose any health risks.

*“If they could say, yeah, we’re the cleanest, but it still might be really heavily polluting, it just that they happen to be the best of a bad bunch, but generally it’s reassuring.” (Hackney resident)*

*“You just google burning waste, just google it and page after page is saying it’s wrong. They say there’s a common misconception, but if you’re researching it, there’s study after study with people saying that it is a problem.” (Haringey resident)*

*“To me, this is the most concerning bit out of everything, the fact that it says there is no proof, but for health, there quite clearly is.” (Haringey resident)*

Some respondents felt there should be more information and evidence provided about performance and the negative impacts not just the benefits. They also felt more context should be provided and comparisons made to the existing and other facilities to make it easier to understand.

*“Well, yes, because as well as giving it context, it’s a feasible thing, the old site is not a figment of imagination, it actually was there and it was doing what it was doing, so why don’t you give us the statistics of what it was doing and what the new site is potentially going to do, because then you can make a quick informal judgement from there and see whether there is actually a benefit going forward.” (Barnet resident)*

A couple of respondents said they would feel reassured if the new facilities had support from reputable environmental groups or key figures in the sector.

*“I have one other thought in that I probably would have trusted this information a little bit more if they had some quotes or consultation with major climate change charities.” (Haringey resident)*

*“A little line, a David Attenborough comment type thing would always be greatly appreciated on anything like this. Yeah, I mean I would always listen if it’s something like David Attenborough. Because it’s leaving me thinking do I trust this, do I believe them, you know, it’s kind of just words really, there’s no context.” (Haringey resident)*

However, across the groups, some respondents felt that people in the area would be more focused and concerned about pollution from the North Circular and the changes associated with the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) regarding air quality rather than worrying about the impact of the new facilities.

*“People are up in arms more about the ULEZ charge and probably don’t even know about this site as that is more important to them now. The air pollution from the North Circular is generally bad so I think more people will be distracted by those issues.” (Islington resident)*

*“I just think the location of the site is right next to the North Circular road, so I’d be a lot more concerned about the air pollution coming from the cars driving along the North Circular than anything that this [site] is producing.” (Hackney resident)*

## 4.16 Priorities for the future

### 4.16.1 Thought on the options shown

All respondents were shown a list of potential priorities for NLWA to consider in the future when considering waste management. They were:

- Cost effectiveness;
- Protecting the environment & reducing volume of waste going to landfill;
- Benefit to the local community;
- Creating local jobs;

- Creating opportunities for young people;
- Educating people about waste disposal; and
- Educating people about creating energy from waste.

Across the groups most respondents felt protecting the environment and educating people about waste management were the main priorities, with many making the connection that if we start with educating people about the need to reduce waste and how to do it then this will improve the environment in the long run.

Respondents felt that education about the energy from waste process would help reassure those who have concerns about the new facilities, given that most respondents across the groups did not know much, if anything, about the process and how it works prior to attending the groups.

Some respondents mentioned that cost-effectiveness does need to be considered as they recognise when it affects their council tax etc. These respondents felt that the cost implications should not affect taxpayers and should come from allocated funding and budgets.

*“You know, I’m in camp B, however with council tax rising and that’s just going to keep going, because of all these Covid tests that we’ve been taking daily for however long. So, that’s only going to go up, so there’s a fine line, because obviously there is people who are in difficulty and they don’t have extra. So, for them, you know, that’s an issue as well and so I think there’s, yeah, I’d definitely put myself in B, I think it’s definitely very important. However, depending on what those costs are, you know, we’ve got to be inclusive to everyone, really and get them on board.” (Waltham Forest resident)*

A few respondents questioned whether the facilities will be run and paid for by a private firm, sharing concerns about the financial aspects if this were the case.

However, some respondents felt that action needs to be taken “regardless of what the financial cost is” as protecting the environment is more important than money.

*“I think in the long-run, any money that we would save now [by choosing the most cost-effective approach for waste management], we would end up paying out in the future, but I mean we’ve got to act now, regardless of what the financial cost is.” (Haringey resident)*

*“I personally don’t think we can take the middle ground if we want to address climate change.” (Haringey resident)*

Respondents felt that the cost aspect of this development is one of the key details missing from the information provided. Whilst many felt there were not many alternatives, how the facility was going to be funded and the total cost of the project was thought to be important information. Excluding this information was felt too intentional to avoid negative reactions.

Some respondents felt it wasn’t just the resident’s responsibility to increase recycling and reduce waste and felt businesses needed to be encouraged and lobbied to reduce the amount of packaging produced as that is part of the problem.

*“It is not just about us though. What about big businesses such as Amazon and their packaging? It has got to be everyone not just the residents that are forced to take the hit.” (Camden resident)*

Add-on benefits or “good to have” priorities seemed to be impacts on the local community, jobs and opportunities for young people if everything else was taken care of prior. Some said that if the other priorities are focused on and the new facilities perform as well as suggested, these “good to have” aspects will follow.

## 5. Conclusions

Fourteen focus groups were undertaken with 94 residents about the awareness of waste management, the NLHPP and general views on key NLWA messaging.

### 5.1 Summary of key points raised by residents:

- Levels of recycling activity and knowledge about recycling differed by respondents and was mixed across borough. Some residents had every type of bin and made numerous trips to the recycling centre throughout the year whilst others tried to recycle items but did not pay too much attention to the rules and regulations about recycling.
- Most of the respondents were largely unaware of NLWA's existence, who they are and what they are responsible for
- Some respondents were aware of the current site but knowledge on the activities conducted at the site differed between respondents. Some knew of the site and was aware it had some purpose connected with waste but did not know more than that whilst others knew about it due to knowledge through work, family members or information they had seen online,
- Most of the respondents were also largely unaware of the NLHPP and the future development plans of the site
- A few of the respondents felt the NLHPP sounded very positive and were surprised they had not heard more about it
- Many respondents wanted to know more about the site and understand what impacts the site will have on the immediate area as well as the North London areas as a whole
- Whilst some respondents felt the NLHPP was positive in principle, they felt the key messaging was not transparent and only provided positive information and did not describe any limitations or possible negative impacts.
- Some respondents struggled to put the information presented to them into context as figures incorporated were difficult to comprehend without more context
- Some respondents felt the information was too much "like a sales pitch" which made them suspicious about what wasn't being said
- Most respondents were more inclined to being more environmentally sustainable compared to cost-effective when asked about importance. However several respondents did point out that increasing living costs is affecting everyone, especially at the moment where it was felt, current times are difficult for a lot of people

# Appendix A Discussion Guide

## NLWA Resident Focus Groups

*This topic guide has been designed to provide structure to the interviews – it is **NOT intended to be used as a script**. To help the moderator, prompts have been included (throughout the guide see 'PROBE'); these are suggestions of questions that can be asked if appropriate to probe deeper into the respondents' views.*

### Background

- Self / AECOM / independent consultancy and Conducting research on behalf of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA).
- Purpose of research to talk about the NLHPP site and communications.
- Emphasise there are no right or wrong answers.
- Emphasise confidentiality – recording interview for accuracy of reporting. Recording will not be passed on to anyone outside the research team or the client team. Findings are aggregated for reporting. Stress anonymity in reporting of findings.
  - Mobiles on silent
  - Cameras v no cameras
  - How the discussion will work (contributing to discussions, materials being shared)
  - Consent form check

All feedback today and the session will remain anonymous.

### Introductions

- Name?
- Where do they live?
  - Borough?
  - Flats? Type of house? Community?

**5 mins**

### Awareness of current waste disposal and recycling

- What type of waste do they have?
- What happens to their residual waste?
  - How often?
  - Communal (if in flats) – what happens to it?
  - Do they visit waste disposal sites themselves?
  - If not, how do they get rid of extra waste or big items?
    - Previous communication about household waste?
- What proportion of their rubbish do they currently recycle?
  - How many types of bins do they have?
  - How accessible are their bins?

- Are they required to sort their recycling?
  - Do they always sort their recycling?

**MODERATOR:** Have the recycling stats for the boroughs to hand in case a respondent asks but only use if prompted by the discussion

*Authority – Percentage household waste sent for Reuse, Recycling or Composting*

*NB these figs for 20/21 are being verified but are unlikely to change (Neil Carrett checking with each borough 27.10.21)*

<i>Barnet LB</i>	<i>28.9%</i>
<i>Camden LB</i>	<i>28.6%</i>
<i>Enfield LB</i>	<i>33.2%</i>
<i>Hackney LB</i>	<i>28.1%</i>
<i>Haringey LB</i>	<i>31.0%</i>
<i>Islington LB</i>	<i>31.3%</i>
<i>Waltham Forest LB</i>	<i>31.9%</i>

- Do they know what happens to their waste once it has left their property?
  - If yes, where does their waste go?
    - i.e. Landfill?
    - Another facility? – if so any ideas where?
    - Incinerated?
  - If no, where do they think their waste goes?
  - PROBE for ideas

#### **ASK ALL**

- Is it something they think about?
  - PROBE: Why? / Why not?
- What do they think about using non-recyclable household waste to generate energy (for heat and power)?

**10 mins**

### **Awareness of existing site at Edmonton**

- Are they aware of the existing waste disposal facilities at Edmonton?
- If yes,
  - How do they know about the facility?
  - How did they hear about the facility? From where, what is the source of the information?
  - What does it do/ what is its purpose?
  - Do they know what happens at the site?
- If no, moderator to explain about the facility, its purpose and location. READ OUT/ SHOW BELOW as appropriate (have a map or graphic of EcoPark ready to show location if required).
  - *Edmonton EcoPark is a waste management site located immediately to the north of the North Circular and to the west of the River Lee Navigation.*
  - *LondonEnergy Ltd operate the current waste management activities at Edmonton EcoPark which includes a bulky waste handling facility and energy from waste plant which manages north London's non-recyclable waste.*
  - *The existing facility at Edmonton EcoPark has successfully diverted over 21 million tonnes of waste from landfill since energy from waste treatment started nearly 50 years ago.*

- *The existing facility at Edmonton EcoPark is the oldest facility of its type in London and one of the oldest in Europe. Whilst it has many large investments over the decades, the facility will reach the end of its useful life soon and is being replaced by new facilities.*
- Now that they have heard more information about the site at Edmonton, what do they think about the existing site?
  - Positives?
  - Concerns?

**5 mins**

## Awareness of the NLHPP

- Are they aware of North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP)?
- If yes,
  - What is it?
  - Where is it?
  - Why are the new facilities being built?
  - Why now?
  - PROBE: How does the new site differ from what is currently there?
- If no, \*Moderator to explain about site, provide key information. READ OUT/ SHOW BELOW. (have the NLHPP site plan ready to show and then drip feed each of the 3 key points and talk about them).
  - *The NLHPP is NLWA's plan for a new sustainable waste hub in north London at the Edmonton EcoPark. It will replace the existing facility which is reaching the end of its operational life after diverting non-recyclable waste from landfill for 50 years.*
  - *The NLHPP will deliver:*
    - *an **Energy Recovery Facility (ERF)** to generate low carbon energy from waste, in the form of heat and power.*
    - *a **Resource Recovery Facility (RRF)** with an area to process bulky waste and prepare materials for energy recovery, including a brand-new Reuse and Recycling Centre for residents to use.*
    - *A new visitor and education centre on the River Lee Navigation, known as **EcoPark House**, where the local community will be able to learn more about waste management and recycling, and how to reduce the carbon impact of their waste. It will also provide a new modern home for the Edmonton Sea Cadets.*

### ASK ALL

- What do they think about the new facilities?
  - o Likes?
  - o Dislikes?
- Do they have any concerns about what they have just heard or discussed?
- PROBE: Why do they say that?

**5 mins**

## Impacts of the new facilities

- Thinking about the new facilities at the Edmonton EcoPark, what do they think it will provide for them and the local community?
  - PROBE on environmental benefits
  - PROBE on opinion on energy from waste and alternative disposal options for residual waste
  - PROBE on employment and training opportunities

- PROBE on creating opportunities for local businesses
- PROBE on personal impacts
- Do they have any concerns about the impact of the new facilities on them?
  - Yes? No?
  - What concerns?
  - Why? Why not?

**5 mins**

**MODERATOR TO READ OUT/ SHOW ON SCREEN INFO ON THE FOLLOWING:**

*THE NLHPP will turn waste collected across seven north London boroughs into low-carbon energy, enough to power up to 127,000 homes in the local area. This includes heat for up to 50,000 homes that will avoid the need for gas boilers, which makes the environmental performance of our facility much better than most other energy from waste plants in the country.*

- What do they think about this information?
  - How does it make them feel?
  - Does this impact their opinion?
  - Why? / Why not?

**MODERATOR TO READ OUT/ SHOW ON SCREEN INFO ON THE FOLLOWING:**

*The NLHPP will support a skills training programme that will create over 100 apprenticeships and 225 skills training opportunities for the local community. The project will also provide over 2,500 job opportunities during the construction phase and operation of the site.*

Total appointed	19	
LB Enfield	10	
LB Haringey	2	
LB Waltham Forest		2
LB Barnet	0	
LB Islington	0	
LB Camden	0	
LB Hackney	1	
Other	4	

**Training Placements**

Total completed	88	
LB Enfield	22	
LB Haringey	38	
LB Waltham Forest		21
LB Barnet	6	
LB Islington	0	
LB Camden	0	
LB Hackney	1	
Other	0	

In **xx [name borough]** to date the project has created xx apprenticeships.

- What do they think about this information?
- How does it make them feel?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not?

**MODERATOR TO READ OUT/ SHOW ON SCREEN INFO ON THE FOLLOWING:**

*The NLHPP is contributing positively to the local area and surrounding communities. NLWA have set targets to achieve 25% local employment and 10% local expenditure. They have already exceeded the 25% employing local people.*

*NLWA is using north London suppliers and has a school outreach programme hosting careers events and talking to young people about careers in the construction industry*

*We have not reported on job creation to date but can provide a profile of the workforce:*

*Local Labour*

% Local Area	25.6% (from Enfield, Haringey and WF)	
LB Enfield	14.0%	
LB Haringey	7.2%	
LB Waltham Forest	4.4%	
LB Barnet	2.7%	
Epping Forest DC	0.0%	
Broxbourne BC	1.8%	
LB Islington	1.8%	
LB Camden	0.4%	
LB Hackney	1.6%	
Other (other London boroughs and across UK)		66.3%
Not stated	0.0%	

- What do they think about this information?
- How does it make them feel?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not?

**MODERATOR TO READ OUT/ SHOW ON SCREEN INFO ON THE FOLLOWING:**

*NLHPP will support higher recycling rates across north London and is a vital part of NLWA's sustainable waste strategy to preserve resources and protect the environment today and for future generations.*

*The NLHPP will use the latest technologies and will be one of the safest and cleanest facilities in the country. It will perform more than 60% better than the current facility in reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides – one of main emissions linked to air pollution.*

*The new facilities will save the equivalent of 215,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year compared to landfill – this is the same as taking 110,000 cars off the road.*

- What do they think about this information?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not?
- Given all the information provided, what are their opinions (about the new facilities) now?
  - Stayed the same?
  - Changed (positive / negative)?

If any respondent is against the site or argues that it is unnecessary,

- Not all waste can be recycled, and based on this discussion, what should happen to non-recyclable waste if not to these new facilities?
- Do they know of any other facilities?
  - If yes, where?
  - How does that facility compare to these new facilities?

**MODERATOR TO READ OUT/ SHOW ON SCREEN INFO ON THE FOLLOWING:**

*The other options are for NLWA to send north London's waste to landfill, which produces highly concentrated greenhouse gas emissions. Or NLWA could use energy from waste facilities outside north*

*London, which would cost more to taxpayers and inevitably mean using facilities with less stringent environmental standards.*

- What do they think about this information?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not?

**25 mins**

## Prior knowledge of NLHPP

- Where did you hear about NLHPP?
  - How?
  - What sources?
    - Television?
    - Social media?
    - Newspaper (online/ print)?
    - News articles?
    - Radio?
    - Word of mouth?
  - Has previous information influenced your thinking?
    - Why? / Why not?
- Have they investigated or looked into the information they have previously seen/ heard?
  - How?
  - Are they confident the information is accurate?
  - What do they think about any information they have read / seen?

**10 mins**

## The waste agenda

- How important is the waste agenda to them?
  - PROBE: Important / Not important? Why not?

### MODERATOR TO READ OUT BELOW/ SHOW ON SCREEN

- *As the population in north London is expected to grow, we do expect that people will recycle more and produce less waste in the future. But overall, there will be more people producing waste, which means we need to plan for increasing volumes of waste.*
- *Energy recovery is the most sustainable and responsible solution for managing future volumes of non-recyclable waste at Edmonton EcoPark.*
- *How important is it for you that your council chooses the most cost-effective solution when collecting and treating non-recyclable waste versus your council choosing the most environmentally sustainable solution when collecting and treating non-recyclable waste?*
  - Which option is the more cost-effective / most environmentally sustainable?

**10 mins**

## Climate emergency

- *The NLHPP is instrumental to tackling the Climate Emergency declared by north London boroughs. Failure to build this world-class project will risk the waste from over two million north Londoners being sent to rot in landfill where it will produce greenhouse gas emissions.*

- What do they think about that information?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not

**5 mins**

## Air quality

*There is a common misconception that emissions from energy-from-waste plants contain significant levels of pollutants and that they are associated with health risks, despite there being no evidence to support this.*

*We're investing in the most advanced technology possible to capture, control and monitor emissions from the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) making it one of the safest and cleanest in the world. Our new facility will comply with the strict public health standards set by the Environment Agency and the contribution of the ERF to local residents' exposure to air pollutants will be extremely small.*

- What do they think about that information?
- Does this impact their opinion?
- Why? / Why not

**5 mins**

## Priorities

*We have spoken about a lot of subjects relating to NLHPP today – in rank order, in your opinion what are the most important when we talk about processing waste?*

- *Cost-effectiveness*
- *Protecting the environment & reducing volume of waste going to landfill*
- *Benefit to the local community*
- *Creating local jobs*
- *Creating opportunities for young people*
- *Educating people about waste disposal*
- *Educating people about creating energy from waste*

**- 5 mins**

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