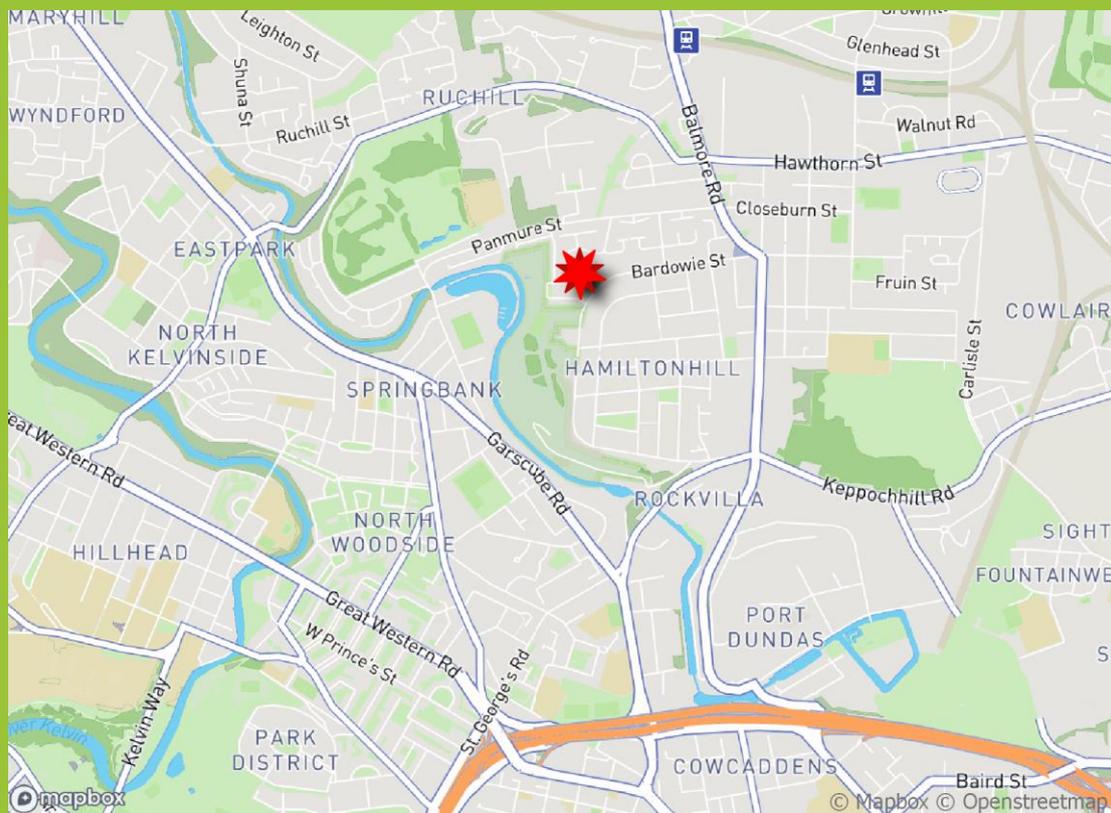
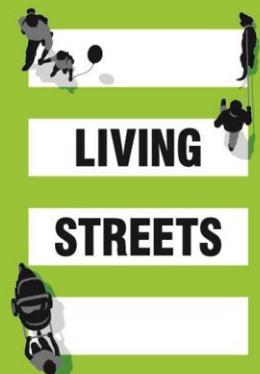


Pedestrian conditions assessment Wester Common (Queens Cross H.A.) Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities 2020-21



We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday, local journeys.



Contents

Summary	3
Key points for Registered Social Landlord	3
Background note:	3
Introduction	4
Key factors we assess.....	4
Location.....	5
Observations	6
Key observations.....	6
Secondary observations.....	8
Potential improvements.....	12
Led by the Registered Social Landlord:.....	12
Influenced by the Registered Social Landlord	13
Longer term or more complex change.....	13
Further information	14
Potential funding	14

Summary

Key points for Registered Social Landlord

Our assessment of the area around Wester Common, which should be checked with residents and other stakeholders, leads us to conclude that pedestrians are disadvantaged by these key issues:

- The many brownfield sites nearby create environments which many people will feel to be unwelcoming, particularly after dark or later at night. Large areas of green space and barriers like the canal, compound issues, meaning that pedestrian-friendly routes are seriously restricted.
- Key routes for pedestrians depend on a small number of key roads, each of which has been designed with a focus on them being high-capacity radial routes for traffic.

As the Registered Social Landlord, it may only be possible for Queens Cross Housing Association to lead action in connection with a small number of the issues and ideas described in this report. The most significant of these might be around:

- small scale local improvements to the path network around the multistorey buildings,
- highlighting wider pedestrian desire lines in the area to stakeholders, with a view to influencing longer term development.

We report on wider issues because we consider that the better these are understood the greater the likelihood of change – whether locally and more generally.

Background note:

Our urban environments are defined by interrelated features under the influence of many different bodies, and this report is about current conditions whatever their cause. Registered Social Landlords do not generally have control over the main factors which affect pedestrians in the wider areas around the properties they manage. Likewise local authorities - with limited resources and budgets, and facing numerous other constraints - do not have immediate control over many of the factors which affect pedestrians.

However, in the longer term it is helpful if problems are understood, and potential solutions are explored. Registered Social Landlords may be able to have a positive influence, making more immediate changes where they have the power to do so, supporting others to understand the issues their residents face, and playing their part in working toward change.

This report is based on an assessment which used mapping and information available from sources such as Google Streetview. Prior to finalising this report we presented the content to Queens Cross Housing Association as an initial check of its accuracy. The intention is that the information in the report is used to support a longer informed discussion with local residents, as they are the real experts on the quality of the experience for pedestrians in the areas where they live.

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Introduction

Living Streets has received funding from the Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities, administered by Cycling Scotland. We are assessing conditions for pedestrians around properties managed by Registered Social Landlords.

This report presents observations and suggestions for improving conditions, following an assessment of the area around the Queens Cross Housing Association property at Wester Common, Glasgow.

Key factors we assess

Our assessment looked at issues such as the following:

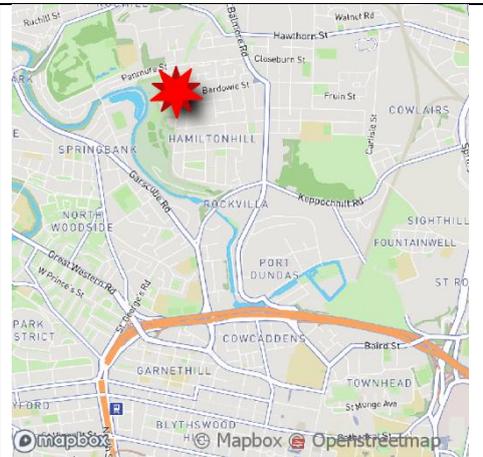
- **Footway (i.e. pavement)¹ and path provision:** the presence, surface quality, continuity, width, obstruction, and design of footways and paths.
- **Accessibility:** how far footways and paths, and their interaction with the carriageways of streets, have been designed to accommodate disabled people and others less able to deal with complicated or dangerous conditions.
- **General area design and character:** whether this is an area full of human activity and street life or one dominated by the movement of or parking of vehicles and the provision of roads designed primarily to facilitate these things.
- **Local area traffic-related safety:** looking at possibility of risk of injury from vehicles, and evaluating the likely effects of this risk on behaviour, not least in terms of how easily pedestrians cross streets or junctions, but also on how pleasant or otherwise a journey might be.
- **Whether streets and paths are welcoming to pedestrians:** both in and around an area, including focusing on how they will feel after dark or later at night – considering in particular what ‘passive surveillance’² exists, and to what level streets and paths are overlooked from buildings nearby.
- **Area permeability:** looking at whether paths and footways connect to provide convenient shorter routes for pedestrians, and longer routes for those driving – or whether routes for pedestrians are defined by following streets which have been designed around vehicle use, or by the necessity to negotiate these safely.
- **Entry and exit points and routes from an area:** looking at what boundaries around the area define these points/routes, and conditions for pedestrians here.
- **Likely destinations outside the local area and routes to/from these:** considering pedestrian journeys primarily for utility journeys – including for shopping, education, and work – and conditions for pedestrians along these, distances, and potential use of public transport.

¹ For clarity this report uses the word term ‘footway’ rather than the phrase ‘the pavement’ to describe the space for walking on beside a road. We do this because the word ‘pavement’ is also used in technical discussion to describe the actual material a road or path is constructed from.

² We use the term ‘passive surveillance’ to describe the way in which it feels safer to be on a street where there are other people nearby who may be able to see activity, including those who might look out from the windows of a building – even if nobody is currently actively doing so.

Location

Wester Common is sited in North Glasgow, around 2km north of Glasgow City Centre.



Location

The Wester Common area appears to be defined by the multistorey blocks, and a small number of buildings of a similar age immediately beside these. It appears as a distinct area connected to Hamiltonhill – which it sits to the west of.



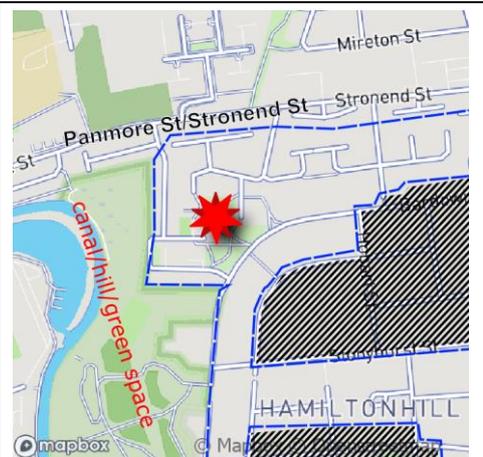
Main buildings marked in yellow

Wester Common and Hamiltonhill appear to have some relatively clear boundaries.

West/southwest, the green area and canal, at a significantly lower level compared to Wester Common, provide a distinct boundary.

There are very large areas of brownfield (i.e. waste/derelict) ground – the former site of housing - to the south, southeast and east. These define what may feel to be a ‘no man’s land’.

To the north, Panmure St (Stronend St) feels to be designed with a focus on through traffic, and thus becomes a northern boundary to the residential area.



Brownfield sites shaded, blue dashed line around current residential area.

Observations

Key observations

We think that these issues (and any positive points) most strongly influence the experience of pedestrians in the area. These issues may arise from many different factors. The Registered Social Landlord, and even the local authority, may have little or no direct control over some of them.

There are large areas of brownfield land locally, the previous site of housing. Streets here are not overlooked or are bordered with overgrown bushes. Many pedestrians might feel isolated or threatened in or beside such areas, particularly after dark or later at night.

There are also areas of green space, and semi-industrial land uses, or other areas fenced off from the street. These areas also help to create streets on which pedestrians might feel isolated, particularly after dark or later at night – although both industrial areas and green space may be valuable in other terms.

This is an issue both locally, and in terms of a much wider area of North Glasgow.

The maps to the right are shaded to indicate areas of land use which do not contribute to 'passive surveillance' on the streets (or which are otherwise inaccessible). We use the phrase 'passive surveillance' to refer to the way that certain types of building make a street feel to be a place where a pedestrian would not feel to be alone and isolated, even if no other people can currently be seen on the street.



Local areas which do not contribute 'passive surveillance'



Wider areas which do not contribute 'passive surveillance'

[Links to representative images on Google Streetview:](#)

[Bardowie St \(direct route to Saracen Cross\)](#)

[Ellesmere St \(direct route south\)](#)

[Bohnill St \(brownfield land nearby\)](#)

Many longer pedestrian journeys in the area are likely to rely on key roads – which include Panmure Street, Garscube Road, Possil Road, and Saracen Street (later Craighall Road). The need to cross the nearby canal, railway lines, or the M8 motorway, mean that in places the use of these roads cannot easily be avoided.

In many places these roads are designed with a focus on providing for through traffic, with residential buildings absent or set back from the carriageway. Pedestrian journeys along such roads are uninteresting, and may feel unwelcoming after dark or later at night.

In places traffic may pass very close to pedestrians, with noise and the associated threat of injury, and the potential for unpleasant conditions in wet weather.

These roads may remain busy with motor vehicles even after dark, meaning that pedestrians may feel less isolated here than they would otherwise.



Key roads for longer pedestrian journeys

[Links to representative images on Google Streetview:](#)

[Possil Road \(route to city\)](#)

[Garscube Road \(route to city\)](#)

[Craighall Rd \(alternate route toward city\)](#)

[Panmure St \(route west toward Maryhill\)](#)

[Firhill Rd \(route toward Maryhill\)](#)

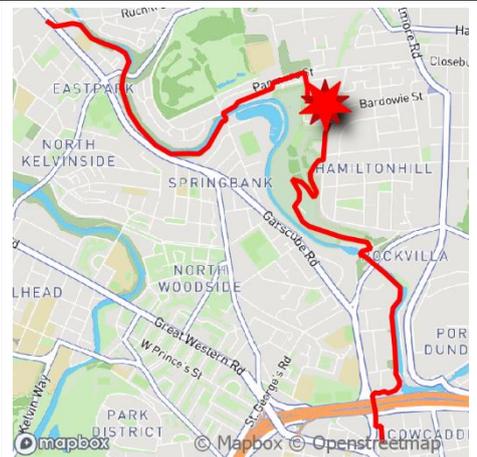
Some local streets in the area are extremely wide, (e.g. 12 metres) with very little traffic use, and this may encourage high speeds or other antisocial use of vehicles.

[Links to representative images on Google Streetview:](#)

[Bardowie St](#)

There are some routes available through nearby green areas which may provide useful alternatives for pedestrians and people cycling. These are likely to feel unwelcoming or threatening to many people after dark or later at night.

The canal towpath is a particularly important example of such a route. This can be used as a key part of journeys toward either Maryhill or the City Centre. The route toward Maryhill may feel to be too indirect for many to choose to use it, and small issues with access may feel more significant than they would otherwise.



Routes using the canal towpath, toward Maryhill / City Centre

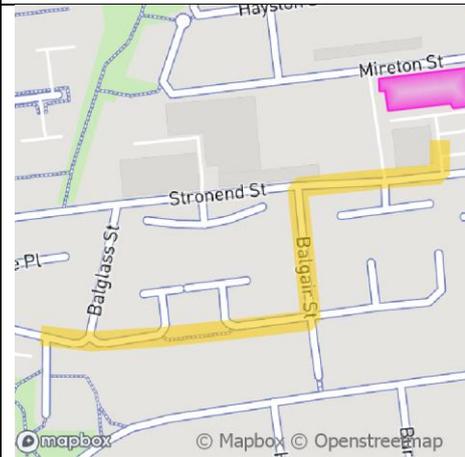
Secondary observations

<p>Maryhill is just over 1km to the west of Wester Common.</p>	
<p>All local routes directly west must use at least part of Panmure Street.</p>	
<p>The topography (hill) here means that residential properties are set back from Panmure St – accessed by separate streets either above or below the street. The footway (pavement) is bounded by extensive guard railing. This is unlikely to feel to offer a pleasant experience for pedestrians, particularly after dark or later at night.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: <u>Panmure Street guard railing</u></p>
<p>A valuable route exists westward which minimises the use of Panmure Street, with a short pedestrian path linking Panmure Gate to the bridge over the canal at Firhill Road. The path is closely overlooked by relatively new residential buildings, and thus may feel welcoming even after dark or later at night.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: Panmure Gate <u>Canalside path at Firhill Road</u></p>
<p>Firhill Road immediately south of the canal bridge, may feel to be less welcoming after dark or later at night. Most journeys westward, including to Maryhill Road, must negotiate this area.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: <u>Firhill Road south of canal</u></p>
<p>The closest larger shop for food is the Lidl Supermarket on Stronend Street, 0.6km east.</p> <p>There are other shops and facilities around Saracen Cross, on Balmore Road and Saracen Street, also around 0.6km east.</p>	 <p>Location of Lidl supermarket</p>
<p>Routes for journeys east may often be chosen to avoid the 'no man's land' defined by the brownfield sites, particularly for journeys after dark or later at night. The only option available which properly allows for this choice is via Panmure Street (Stronend Street).</p> <p>Panmure St/Stronend St is designed primarily to provide for through traffic. Residential buildings are</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: <u>Bardowie Street</u></p>

set back from the carriageway for this reason. Parts of the street are bordered by more industrial buildings. These features make the street less welcoming.

Despite these issues the pedestrian space is generally still overlooked to some extent. Neighbouring residential buildings are not too distant.

An important route exists toward the Lidl supermarket using the residential Balglass Gardens, Sunnylaw Street, and Balgair Street, which brings pedestrians to Stronend Street only around 200m from Balmore Road.



Useful route toward Lidl supermarket

Despite the neighbouring brownfield land pedestrians using Bardowie Street (to access Saracen Cross more directly) may feel less isolated at times when there are other pedestrians present. It helps that there are only a few areas of the street which are more distant from current residential properties.

There are few obvious destinations north of Wester Common, other than the nearby 'Benview Campus' primary school complex, and Ruchill Park.

Journeys further north from the area are defined by a need to negotiate the park, the associated hill, and brownfield sites east of the park and school.

Many of the routes into and through these areas are not closely overlooked, with pedestrians hidden behind buildings, bushes or other green growth.

Some of these routes may feel unwelcoming to some people all of the time, and to most people after dark or later at night.

These issues are present for routes to the school.

North of these barriers the Forth and Clyde Canal, a golf course, and a railway line present further barriers to pedestrian journeys.

<p>Journeys south, toward the city, are possible on paths away from ordinary streets – beside the canal and the Claypits nature reserve.</p> <p>The city centre is around 2km away ‘as the crow flies’ but around 2.7 km by this route. An underpass beneath the M8 motorway (beside Garscube Road), makes such journeys possible. This route may be unwelcoming later at night but the underpass can be relatively busy at other times. This distance might be covered easily by bicycle. The canal route makes journeys by bike much more welcoming. Few people would consider cycling on the parallel stretches of Garscube Road or Craighall Road.</p> <p>After dark the towpath is likely to feel unwelcoming to many (whether pedestrians or cycling), even in the early evening. Main routes south will rely on Garscube Road or Craighall Road. These have a pavements on at least one side of the road. They are designed to provide high-capacity multi-lane radial routes for motor vehicles, with many sections lacking anything other than industrial buildings. Sections of these roads provide an unwelcoming, uninteresting, or unpleasant atmosphere for pedestrians.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: Garscube Road (route to city) Craighall Rd (alternate route toward city) Canal towpath (1) Canal towpath (2)</p>
<p>In the immediate area around the Wester Common multistorey blocks car parking areas appear to be fairly well controlled, leaving most pedestrian routes free of obstruction.</p> <p>There are some areas where it seems to be common practice to park partly on the footway (pavement). This may prevent some pedestrians from using some routes, particularly if using a wheelchair or other mobility aid. This problem may not be serious at present but there is a risk that the practice will grow if pressure for space for parking increases.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: Parking area Parking area 2</p>
<p>In the immediate area the many fences, walls, and parking areas may mean pedestrian routes may be indirect.</p> <p>There are a few worn desire lines on grass surfaces. Where these exist it suggests that pedestrians feel the formal routes in these areas to be indirect.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: Worn desire line (1) Worn desire line (2)</p>
<p>In the immediate area around the Wester Common multistorey blocks the wide footways may support accessibility, making the use of wheelchairs or other mobility aids easier. There are many raised tables in the carriageway or across car parking areas, which may improve this access.</p>	

<p>These raised tables may not be on desire lines for some journeys, making these less convenient.</p>	
<p>Access to the catchment primary school is made easier by the presence of a signalised crossing of Panmure Street. This is opposite a path connecting directly to the school. This path, which is based around a long flight of steps, is unattractive.</p> <p>The non-denominational secondary school, Hillhead High School, is around 2.5km away by road. Large parts of this journey can be made on residential streets, but this distance is likely to discourage most people from walking here. Many parts of the route might feel relatively safe for cycling, but there are key points where conditions are very much less welcoming.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview: <u>Steps to primary school</u></p>

Potential improvements

This section lists some ideas for change. These are intended to prompt discussion, and are not necessarily recommendations. We've separated the ideas into three rough categories. The first ideas are about changes which might more easily be led by the Registered Social Landlord. The Registered Social Landlord may be able to have a strong influence in connection with the second group of ideas. The third group of ideas are generally for the longer term, or of a nature which means that a much wider group of agencies would need to be involved.

Led by the Registered Social Landlord:

The Registered Social Landlord might consider trying to take a lead on the following issues, although the cooperation of other bodies might be required:

Pedestrian routes within Wester Common

Where desire lines can be seen across grass areas this indicates that pedestrians find the formal routes intended for their use to be indirect. The addition of simple short sections of path, stairs, or the removal of short sections of fence, might be helpful.

A simple review of issues faced by those who use mobility aids, and the routes they wish to take (even if only to access a vehicle), might highlight further barriers, some of which will be simple to resolve.

Discouraging pavement parking

It may be sensible to discourage parking on the footway (pavement). While this may not currently represent a large problem it is simpler to discourage this before car ownership increases. It is common for areas around multistorey residential buildings to suffer from vehicles being parked outside of the intended spaces.

Identifying and highlighting pedestrian desire lines in the much wider area

Queens Cross Housing might identify where pedestrians need to travel to in the wider area, and where there are issues with the quality of routes toward these destinations. With this information already collected the association could be in a better position to provide influence on future development.

In the absence of wider planning of pedestrian routes the changing urban landscape here may ignore them. An example can be seen in the fairly new developments at Panmure Gate and Panmure Close – which have been designed not to connect, despite these being on an obvious pedestrian route from Wester Common toward Maryhill.

Similarly it can be seen that the relatively recent development around Cathness Street (Murano Street student village) has a bridge providing a key crossing of the canal, but that routes to the bridge from the east are very difficult to identify. It might be assumed that the developer here intended the bridge only to be used by local residents of their development, and that wider use was intentionally discouraged.

Influenced by the Registered Social Landlord

These more complex changes might require a much deeper involvement from other bodies, but we guess that the Registered Social Landlord ought to be able to provide strong encouragement or strong influence:

Highlighting the need for improved conditions on the path toward the primary school

The route to the primary school at Benview Campus involves an unattractive path (and stairs) which is between housing and a brownfield site. As the brownfield site is developed this route might be significantly improved. However it is also possible that the route could accidentally be made much less welcoming. Various factors will have an effect, including whether connections are made to this path, and whether it is bounded by houses facing the path, tall fences at the back of garden space, or industrial buildings.

Queens Cross Housing should consider itself to be a stakeholder in this regard.

Longer term or more complex change

The potential improvements listed here are of a nature meaning that change is likely to take much longer, and that the Registered Social Landlord is likely to have much less influence:

Regeneration with a focus on pedestrian-friendly streets

When new housing is built in this area the opportunity should be taken to provide much more pedestrian friendly streets – for the benefit of current residents. This means:

- the use of narrower carriageways which do not offer long straight stretches, even if the original widths of the streets are maintained,
- housing being built close to the streets, with windows that look out onto it,
- pedestrian routes toward obvious destinations being as direct as possible, even if those driving are prevented from using direct routes,
- any pedestrian-only paths being overlooked from the front of buildings (rather than using back alleyways or similar).

Registered Social Landlords in this area should consider using their influence to highlight the need for this form of development. In the absence of this influence it is possible that individual plots of land may be developed to be inward looking, based around the kinds of cul-de-sac seen south of Panmore Road, or with housing behind larger walls or garden areas. An example of such a change in street layout can be seen in the fact that Sunnyslaw Street no longer connects to Balmore Road as it did until at least the 1950s (and presumably much later). Sunnyslaw Street now is in two separate disconnected sections. This disconnection removes one direct pedestrian route toward Saracen Cross. The housing built more recently around the eastern section of Sunnyslaw Street does not face the street at all – and other parts of this street are now bounded by high fences belonging to the new development.

Further information

Potential funding

Funding for improvements to the urban environment might be available from a number of sources, including:

- Places for Everyone:
<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2019/scotland/places-for-everyone/>
- Awards for All:
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/under10k>
- The Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities:
<https://www.cycling.scot/what-we-do/cycling-friendly/social-housing-fund>