

BedZED Resident Satisfaction Survey

This report summarises the main findings of the BedZED Resident Satisfaction Survey. If you would like a copy of the full report, which includes more detailed figures and quotations from residents, please contact Peabody Trust.

Background

Methodology

- BedZED residents were sent a questionnaire asking them for their views on both their home and the estate as a whole.
- The survey was issued by post to residents in three main phases according to residents' moving-in date. This was to ensure that no one received the survey until they had lived at the estate for at least one year.
- A small prize draw was used as an incentive for each of the three phases.
- Two mailings were completed for each phase of the survey to increase the response rate.
- The survey was designed to complement the in-depth interviews being carried out by a postgraduate student as part of her PhD, which is sponsored by the ESRC and Peabody Trust.

Results

- 38 surveys were completed and returned. This gives an overall response rate of 46%.
- The findings below have to be treated with care in terms of releasing them into the public domain. Any findings which are released or published should be cleared with the author (via Peabody Trust)
- All data is accredited to Samantha Elvy and the ESRC, who funded the research.

Summary of Main Findings

Overall Likes

- Residents were asked about their overall likes of life at BedZED. A wide variety of comments were made, with the design of homes, the sense of community, the gardens and sunspaces, the green features of homes, and the reduced energy bills being the most frequently mentioned. (All of these issues are covered in more detail in later sections).

Overall Dislikes

- Residents were also asked about their main dislikes of life at BedZED. The main issues mentioned were problems with the heating system, noise transference between properties, and the parking facilities. (These issues are also covered in more detail in later sections).

Overall Design

- Residents were generally very impressed with the design of the estate and their homes. Properties were described as 'light', 'spacious', 'airy' and 'modern'.
- Virtually all of the residents praised the external appearance of their home, and many said how much they liked its 'modern', 'innovative', and 'interesting' design.
- There was a difference of opinion over the low car environment as some felt this was a strength of the estate design, whilst others felt it did not work well in practice as some people parked in prohibited areas.

Neighbourhood

- The majority of residents liked their immediate neighbourhood at BedZED, but disliked the wider Hackbridge area, mainly due to problems with anti-social behaviour such as graffiti and vandalism.
- These problems do not appear to have extended into the estate itself.

Refuse / Recycling

- Many of the residents mentioned they need more or larger bins for refuse and recycling to deal with problems with overflowing rubbish, or alternatively more frequent collections.

Parking

- The main complaint was the lack of visitor parking.
- A minority of residents commented that many of the parking bays were underutilized and felt these should be reallocated either to residents or as designated bays for visitor or disabled parking. [N.B. A number of the bays were empty because each live work property had a designated bay. These were empty for a long time while these properties were unsold].
- Five people reported problems with people parking in areas other than the designated bays.

Bicycle Storage

- A number of residents said that a more secure alternative would be preferable to the current bicycle storage facility.

Estate Lighting

- The majority of residents are satisfied with the lighting provided on the estate, although some suggested that the lighting which is permanently on during the night should be replaced with sensor lighting.

Security & Privacy

- Security levels are generally good, although there do appear to be a few problems with groups of youths from outside of the estate.
- Privacy levels are generally thought to be adequate. However some residents commented that their gardens were very overlooked by other homes.
- A minority complained that the tours and visits to BedZED affected their privacy.

Internal Design and Layout

- Residents were enthusiastic about the design and layout of their homes.
- However, there does appear to be a problem with the amount of storage space provided as many felt this was inadequate (although it should be noted that this is a common complaint in most resident surveys).

Fixtures and Fittings

- The fixtures and fittings were generally rated highly, although there were some minor complaints about different fittings - e.g. doors that stick, scratched windows etc.

- A small number of leaseholders complained that floor coverings were not provided throughout the house. (N.B. Floor coverings were only provided in the bathroom and kitchen). However, a similar number said they would have liked to choose the bathroom and kitchen floor coverings themselves instead of having lino fitted before they moved in. So there is no clear consensus on whether floor coverings should be provided by the Trust or not.

Sunspace and Gardens

- These were two of the most popular design features, and appear to be valued additions to residents' living space.
- One resident said the sunspace "makes the houses really special to live in."
- There were a few negative comments about the irrigation system in the sky gardens. A number of residents said their lawn had died over the hot summer of 2003, and so questioned whether the irrigation system was sufficient.

Internal Services - Heating, Water, & Electricity*

- About 50% said they had noticed a reduction in fuel bills since living in BedZED.
- There appear to be some gaps in residents' awareness about how to operate their internal services. 26% of residents said they did not know how to turn off their electricity supply in an emergency, and 50% said they could not switch off their water supply. 45% said they did not fully understand how their heating system worked.
- About two thirds of residents said they could not control the temperature of the heating adequately, and 21% said there was not always enough hot water.

* The answers in this section should be treated with some care as many of the surveys from the early phases were returned before the problems with the CHP heating were resolved. In some cases, therefore, the responses are based on the heat provided by the immersion heaters, while the later responses reflect greater experience of the CHP.

Renewable Energy

- About two thirds of residents said it was very important to them to use renewable energy. However, the other third said the cost of electricity was more important.
- Leaseholders were more likely than tenants to say that it was important to them to use renewable energy.

Cost / Value

- The majority of residents felt the properties represented good value for money, and all rent-payers said they were finding the rent affordable.

Information provided to residents

- Many residents rated the handbook and Peabody staff as useful sources of information about their home and the estate, but talking to other residents was the most common way residents said they found out more about BedZED.

Community Facilities and Activities

- Residents were asked which of the community facilities and activities they had used or taken part in, and which they planned to use in the future. The exhibition centre and composting club appear to be particularly popular, and the communal food ordering service is also widely used.

Sense of Community

- Many residents commented on the strong sense of community that has been established at BedZED.
- Reasons for this appear to be a common interest in environmental issues, the community events, and even the scheme design as some said this encouraged them to interact with their neighbours.

Transport and Travel Patterns

- Half of the sample owned one car, and a further 5% owned two cars. The remaining 45% did not own a car.
- A small number of residents said their annual mileage had decreased since moving to BedZED, but the survey data on this issue is fairly weak.

Other Comments

- A number of residents emphasised that despite some areas of dissatisfaction they very much enjoyed living at BedZED.

Conclusions and Other Research

Conclusions

- The feedback is largely positive, with many residents emphasising that despite areas of concern or dissatisfaction they remained both pleased with their property and supportive of the BedZED concept.
- Many residents also commented on the strong sense of community that had emerged on the estate, which was felt to be a particular strength of BedZED.
- However, the feedback does highlight areas which residents feel could be improved including parking, storage space in homes, bicycle storage, response to defects, and problems with the heating system.

Future Research

- The majority of the analysis contained in this report relies heavily on the open-ended responses given by residents.
- There is a reasonable level of detail in the responses, which has helped to build up a good picture of residents' views on a variety of issues.