

Community views on the future of the Robinson House

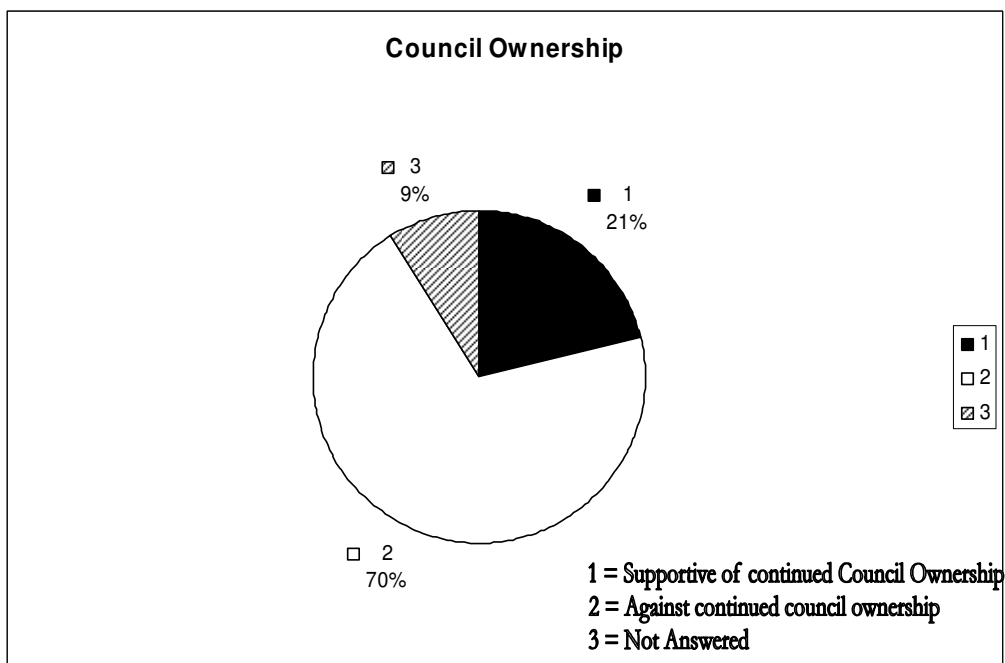
Summary of findings

The biggest single message from the survey was that people thought the future of Robinson House lay outside Council ownership. Most wanted it to go to a housing association, but a few people wanted it to go to private developers.

The survey questionnaire has gone to residents in the housing around Robinson House, delivered by leaflets, and also a few completed in a door to door canvas. The survey was started before the announcement of the Council's decisions not to proceed with the conversion of Robinson House into a homeless shelter. The plans had aroused enormous hostility in the local community. The aim of the survey was to ensure that the community had constructive alternatives to put to the Council about the use of the large building.

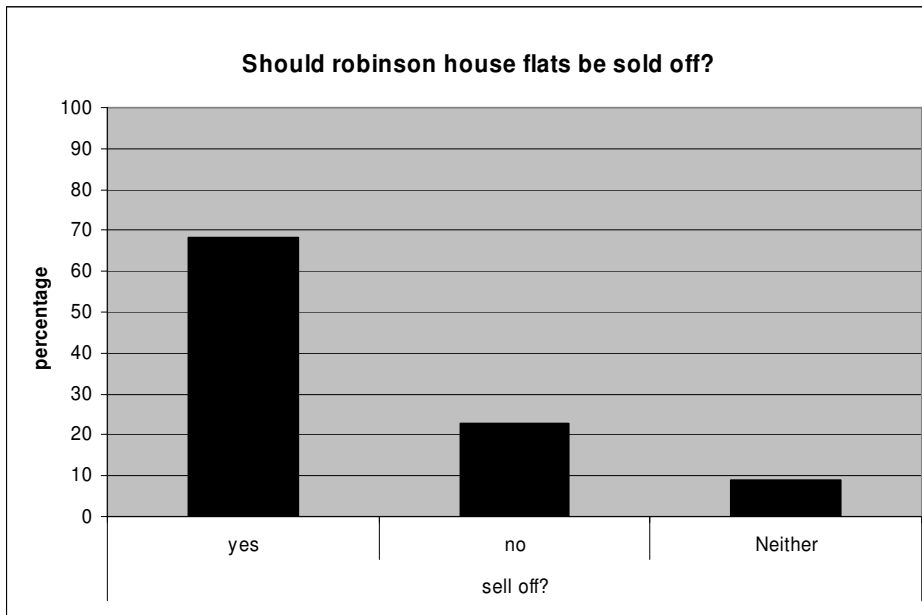
- Most respondents felt that council ownership was not the way forward for the flats.
- If Robinson house were sold off, more people would like to see it go to the hands of a housing association than to a private developer.
- People were divided as to whether the flats should be for sale or rent, a small majority wanted them to be for rent. People's main concern was to deal with the shortage of affordable housing in the area – either for sale or for rent.
- There was support for the flats being available to the general public
- If the flats were to be used for a special purpose, most respondents felt that this purpose should be for pensioners needing sheltered accommodation.

Views on council retaining ownership



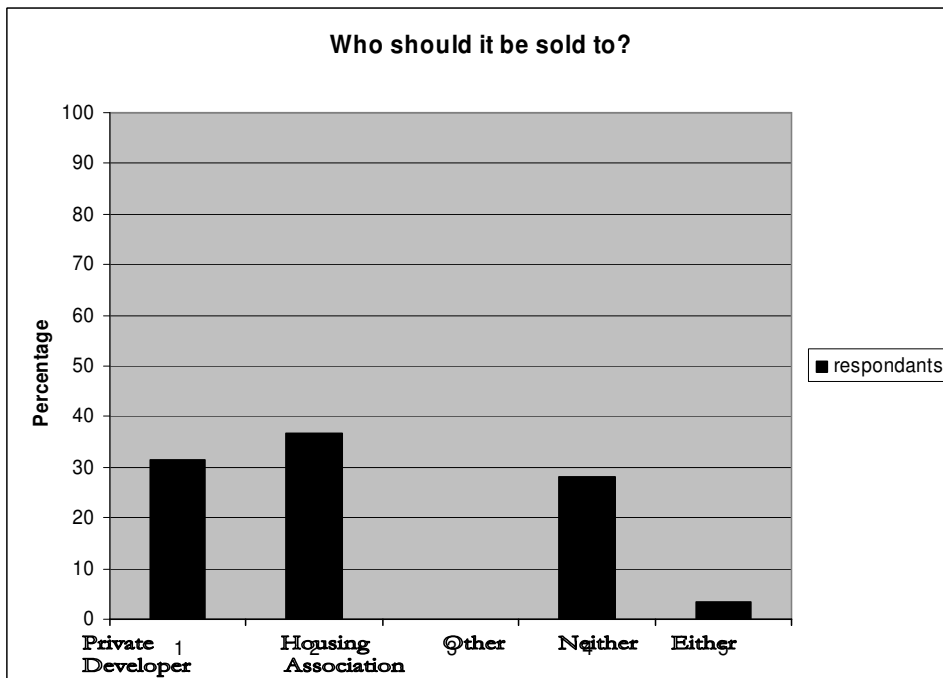
Respondents were asked a simple two choice question on whether the council should retain ownership of Robinson House. As can be seen overwhelmingly respondents felt that the council should not retain ownership.

Views on the sale of Robinson house for development or improvement



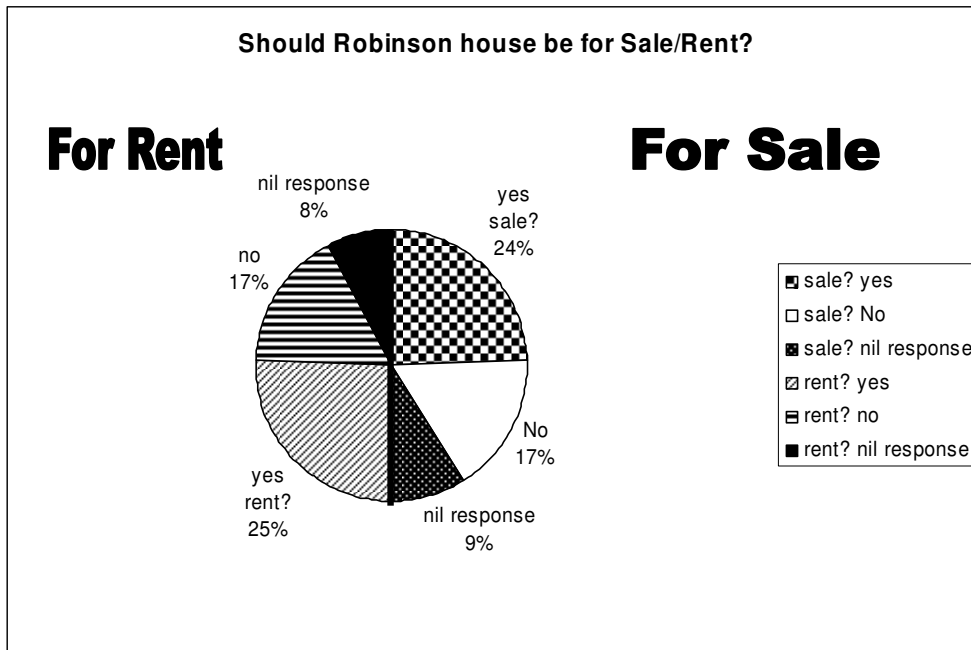
Respondents were also asked another two answer question over whether Robinson House should be sold off for improvement or development. Overwhelmingly respondents felt that for improvement or development the Robinson House flats should be sold off.

Views on who should get ownership if Robinson house was sold off.

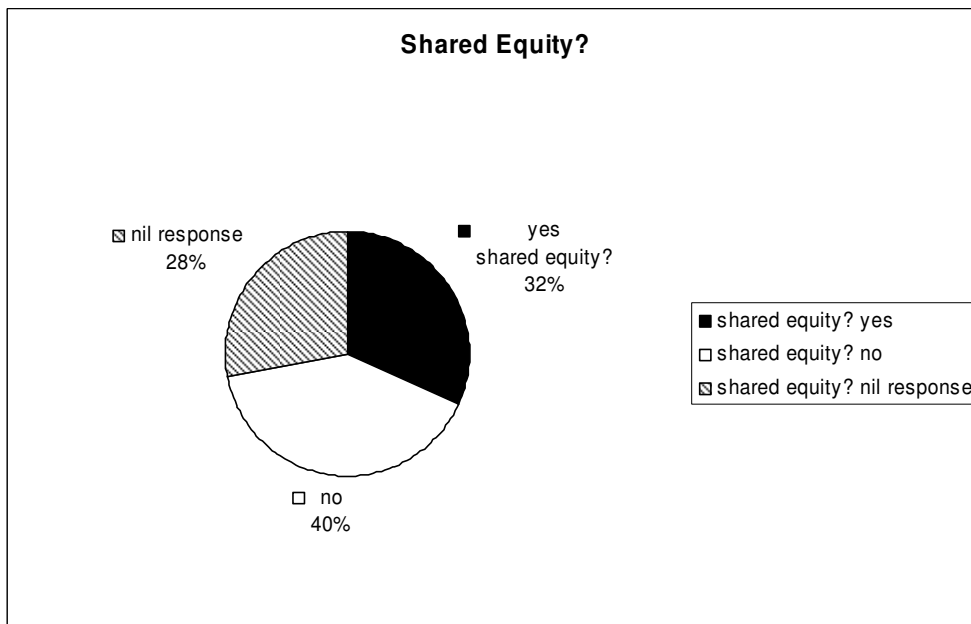


While not all respondents had answered positively to the previous question, when asked who Robinson House should be sold off to most felt that a housing association would be suitable. No respondents suggested an alternative to the two options suggested

Views on the tenure for Robinson House Flats



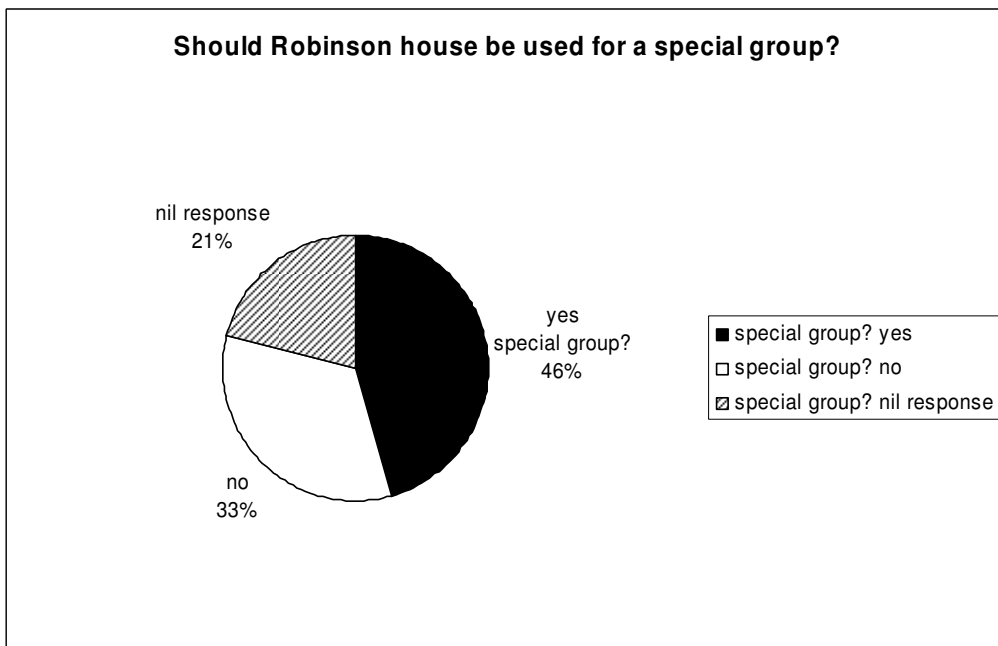
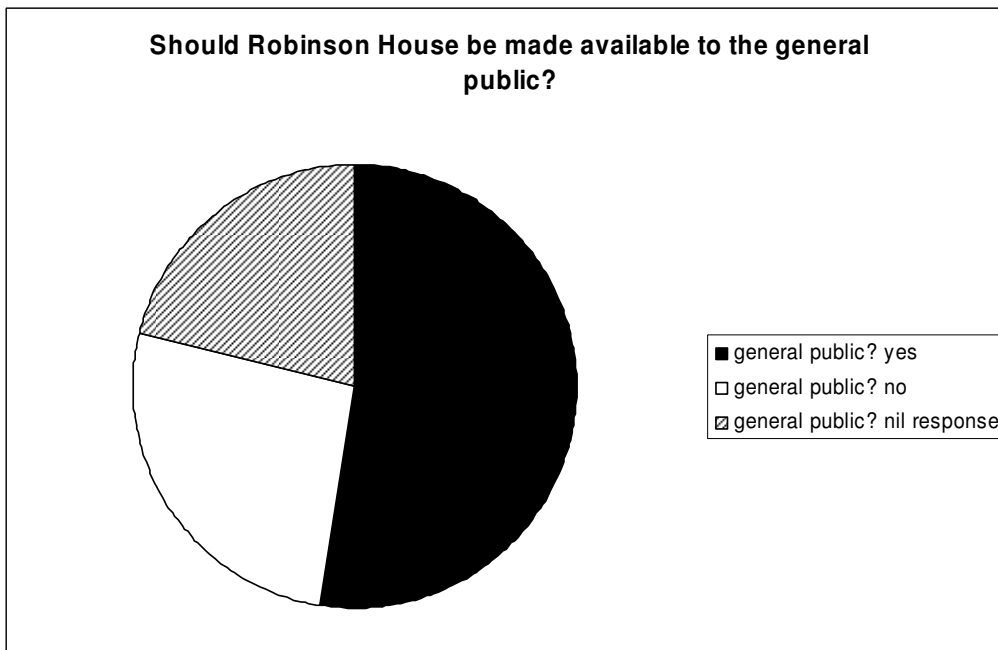
Two similar questions were asked, did respondents want to see Robinson house flats for sale and did respondents want to see them for rent. A similar amount wanted them for sale as for rent though there was a slightly larger amount of people wanted to see the flats for rent. This reflected the mixed views people had about the housing needs in the area: there was a need for more affordable housing both for sale and for rent.



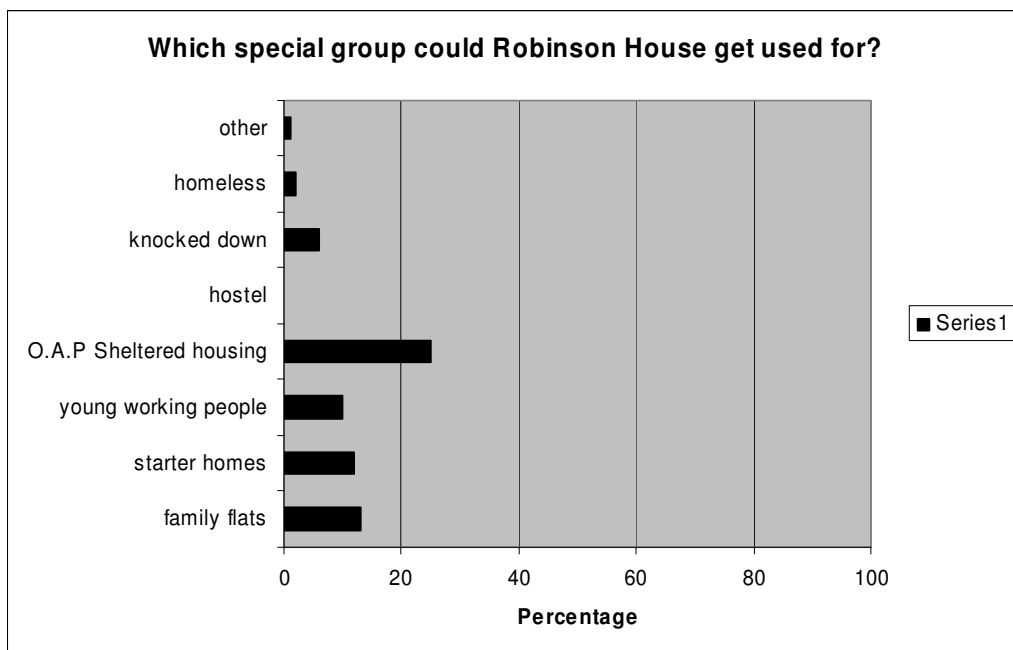
There were mixed views about whether there should be a shared equity scheme at Robinson House: in the door to door canvas people were very unclear as to how such a scheme would work, and what the benefits would be over more conventional tenures.

Views on access to Robinson House flats

Respondents were asked to answer positively or negatively on a number of options. On the matter of whether Robinson House should be used by a special group, just under half of the respondents felt that it should be. Notably, just over half of the respondents responded positively when asked whether the flats should be made available to the general public.



Views on special groups who could occupy Robinson House



There were mixed views over what special groups should be offered flats in Robinson House if it were to be converted for a special purpose. There was a strong feeling towards the flats being used for sheltered housing for pensioners and a notable lack of responses for use as a hostel or for the homeless.

Conclusion

This survey gives an indication of the priorities for the community on the future of Robinson House. Based on these findings, the options which the Council should investigate with local residents for the development of the building are:

- i) Sale/transfer of control of the building to a housing association, or possibly a private developer.
- ii) Use as flats for rent or sale - or a mix of the two. The main priority among residents was to meet housing needs in the local community for properties both for sale and rent.
- iii) The flats should be made available to the general public. If they are to be used for a specialist group the most favoured is for older people, at least on the ground floor of the building. The priority was to have the block brought into proper use without the anti-social behaviour that has been a problem in the past.

In the context of the shortage of housing for local families and their adult children, Robinson House represents a valuable resource. Local residents were prepared to be flexible and realistic about the options for development, but did not want a usage that would either cause problems of disorder in the local area, or exclude local people from getting access to the accommodation in the building.