



**Apsana Begum MP**  
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Richard Hill  
Chief Executive Officer  
One Housing Group  
Atelier House  
64 Pratt Street  
London  
NW1 0DL

Our Ref: AB11604

30 September 2021

Dear Richard,

### **Merger with Riverside**

I am writing to you regarding your consultation for the merger of One Housing Group with Riverside Housing.

Thank you for your update on the consultation process and for details on the pledges for One Housing Group tenants around the merger. I recall our discussion on financial challenges presented to your organisation in the pandemic, when we met earlier this year.

You highlight that a Joint Customer Advisory Panel (JCAP) has been established from your existing engagement structures to oversee the consultation.

Following discussions with the 4 Estates Forum, it became clear that the Resident Panels are not democratically appointed by residents, meaning that JCAP cannot be viewed as genuine resident representation.

Nor can it be said that the One Housing Group Board has a democratically elected resident voice as a result of the issues around the Resident Panels highlighted by the 4 Estates Forum. While One Housing Group are in the process of reviewing its existing engagement structure – I am concerned that while this is under review, it would not be appropriate to press ahead with the merger under the existing engagement structure.

The decision to merge will have a major effect on how the homes of One Housing tenants', leaseholders and shared owners are owned and managed – there must be a meaningful way for their views to be heard.

The ballot which took place on the regeneration of Kedge House demonstrates that One Housing Group can run such a process and a ballot would ensure that the consultation and proposals for any changes have resident voices at its heart.

Whilst I recognise that a ballot is not required by the Regulator of Social Housing, I do believe that One Housing Group should aspire to and can model best possible practice for resident engagement.

In addition, Unite the Union which represents One Housing workers, were informed by yourself that there were likely to be some role reductions. Not only does this raise questions about the responsiveness and remoteness to current One Housing residents following the merger, but also about the role of Unite in the consultation. As the organisation which represents workers, what engagement will be taking place with Unite during the consultation period?

Could you kindly outline what assessment has been made of the viability of a ballot for One Housing residents? Given the democratic deficit in existing resident panels, could you advise whether One Housing Group will commit to offering all residents a vote on whether a merger with Riverside should go ahead?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Apsana', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Apsana Begum MP