

# Equality Impact Assessment



This Equality Impact Assessment considers whether an activity (including policies, procedures, practices, and reviews) may have a positive impact upon protected groups, or may cause discrimination or disadvantage, exclude unjustifiably, discourage or reduce participation, or reduce equal opportunities.

About This EIA Screening	
Activity Title:	Acquisition of affordable housing from the open market
Type of Activity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / policy / procedure development or review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service / function review <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change / restructure <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Directorate:	Growth and Development
Team:	Property Acquisitions
Person Completing this Form:	Russell Buchanan
Other Staff Involved:	Nick Lowther
Date of Review:	31/10/2019

Activity Information
Who implements and is responsible for this activity? Nick Lowther
Briefly describe the aims, objectives, purpose, and intended outcomes of this activity. <i>(consider additional impacts such as health and safety, reputational risk, sustainability, value for money, and other risk factors.)</i> <p>In December 2016 the Council purchased its first properties from the open market (Phase 1). The acquisition of these homes helped to meet the Council's housing demand, provide quality affordable accommodation and mitigate the pressures on the Council's General Fund.</p> <p>Following the success of this program, a Phase 2 and 3 (including the Cheyne Programme) have been delivered and approval has been given for a Phase 4 beginning in quarter 1 2020/21. To date the Council has acquired over 225 affordable homes both in and out-of-London, as well as in-borough homes. The acquisitions of these properties align with the Council's Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy. These units are used to meet the Council's homelessness demand.</p> <p>With increasing housing demand and over 2,400 households currently in temporary accommodation, the intention is to acquire an additional 300 affordable homes in Greater London by extending the existing Cheyne Programme. Properties would be let on ASTs with rents set at LHA rate as per the existing programme.</p> <p>These properties are let in line with the Council's Allocations Policy and Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy, and with regards to the households support networks. Households are helped through this process by Barnet Homes' Housing Options Team.</p> <p>Households are supported by methodically assessing the household's needs including their support networks prior to an offer being made. Potential tenants are</p>

taken on accompanied viewings and are assisted through the sign-up process.

The support package includes:

- A suitability assessment
- A detailed offer letter
- An appeal process
- A post tenancy visit
- Property Inspections

Who will be affected by this activity?

To date we have acquired properties which are predominantly 2 and 3-bedroom homes as these units have had the greatest demand. Therefore families with children are the group most impacted by acquiring and letting of these properties. This units are let by Housing Options to meet homelessness demand. Members of Barnet's black and minority ethnic communities and women are over represented among those living in temporary accommodation and in housing need. Over 70% of households in temporary accommodation are from non-white households, and the main applicant is female in 65% of households.

## Equality Impact

Consider whether the evidence shows potential (in relation to each protected characteristic) to:

- Cause or eliminate discrimination
- Reduce or advance equal opportunities
- Impair or foster good relations

Key Questions:

- Are there any barriers which could impact on how different groups might benefit from this activity?
- Does this activity promote the same choices for different groups as everybody else?
- Could any of the following group's experience of this activity be different?
- Does this activity address the needs and potential barriers of these groups?

Protected Characteristic	Known negative / adverse impact?	Additional information (include the source of any evidence and which groups are affected)
<b>Age</b> (children and young people, 0-18 years)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>At the end of Q4 2018/19 2,163 households in TA in Barnet. Of these 61.7% (1,334) were households with children.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Age</b> (older people: over 60 years)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>At the end of September 2019 there were 113 (4.68%) households in TA whose main applicant was over 60 years. Of these 37, were aged 70 years or over.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Disability</b> (includes mental and physical impairments)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>We are improving data collection on disability to attain more accurate results as often applicants have left this information blank.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Gender</b> (including Transgender)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>According to the GLA projections for the population in 2020 in Barnet: 49% (196,207) of the population are male and 51% (204,530) are female. Women are more represented in temporary accommodation because single applicants with children are more likely to be women than men. At the end of March 2019, 774 (36% of households in TA) were single parent households led by a female. Whereas 94 (4% of households in TA) were single parent households led by a male.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>Of those seeking housing assistance from the Council, 11.86% of applicants are married, 25.67% are single, 4.44% separated, 2.1% divorced, 0.44% widowed, 2.14% cohabiting and 53.35% unknown. Lone adult households are more likely to seek housing assistance, than married households than the Barnet average.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>Barnet Homes does not collect or store information on this protected characteristic. This is because it only relevant at the point it is being collected and for a</p>

		<p>short time period after. Therefore it will be subject to data retention policies.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Race</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>Housing applicants by their ethnic group: 12% of applicants belong to Asian ethnic groups, 13% of applicants were Black, 2% of applicants were Mixed, 26% of applicants belonged to a White ethnic group and 4% belonged to 'Other'. 43% of applicants had either not stated their ethnicity, missing data or preferred not to give.</p> <p>This compared to data on the general population of Barnet demonstrates that those belonging to White, Asian and Other Ethnic groups are less likely to seek assistance for housing, and those belonging to Black ethnic groups are more likely too than the Barnet average.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>The 2011 census showed the most common religious beliefs in Barnet are Christianity (41.2%), followed by Judaism (15.2%), Islam (10.3%), No religion (8.4%), Hinduism (6.2%), Buddhism (1.3%), Other (1.1%), and Sikhism (0.4%). The ONS report on religion (2013) states that the Jewish population have the highest level of employment, and that Muslims have the lowest level of employment. Muslims also have a significantly lower level of economic activity than other religions; the main reasons for this inactivity being because they were looking after the home and family (31%), or because they were students (30%).</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> (lesbian, gay, and bisexual)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>Due to sensitivity by applicants, data collection is low for sexual orientation. There is no evidence to indicate that individuals who identify as a certain sexual orientation are adversely impacted.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation would not negatively impact this group.</p>
<b>Other relevant groups</b> (not covered by the Equality Act 2010) (groups that may experience disadvantage or barriers to access, e.g. single parents, low income families, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<p>Can the negative / adverse impact(s) be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group, or any other reason? Please explain.</p>		
<p>The aim is to acquire additional units of affordable accommodation to meet the Council's housing demand and to provide suitable accommodation for those in housing need. Homes acquired are done so in line with the Council's Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy. Tailored offer letters are made for each household with consideration of their support network. The Council's Allocations Scheme and the Temporary Accommodation Allocation Policy are designed to provide a fair and transparent system to which housing is allocated in Barnet.</p> <p>With the Council acquiring units itself, it is better able to ensure a type and quality of homes to meet the requirements of those in housing needs, specifically: family homes; properties suitable for older people and disabled (including wheelchair adapted) homes.</p>		

Where Barnet Homes is responsible for the day-to-day management of these properties rather than a third party, we are better able to support tenants and maintain the quality of the homes. However, it should be recognised that not everyone will benefit in an equal way.

Have any positive impact(s) on any of the protected characteristics been identified?  
Please briefly explain, providing evidence.

An increase in the number of affordable accommodation rather than reliance on emergency temporary accommodation provided by third parties is of benefit to all the protected characteristics. With over 2,400 household currently in temporary accommodation and many of those housed in emergency accommodation provided by third parties. An increase in the number of more affordable accommodation rather than reliance on costly temporary accommodation provided by third parties will have a positive impact on all the protected characteristics. With the Council acquiring units itself, it is better able to ensure a type and quality of homes to meet the requirements of those in housing needs specifically: family homes; properties suitable for older people and disabled (including wheelchair adapted) homes. Where Barnet Homes is responsible for the day-to-day management of these properties rather than a third party, we are better able to support tenants and maintain the quality of homes.

**Engagement and involvement** (*include who was involved, how and when they were engaged, and the key outcomes*)

How have you engaged stakeholders in gathering evidence or testing the evidence available?

Housing Options have conducted post tenancy visits and carry out regular property inspections to gather feedback from tenants. Performance in terms of repairs, complaints and void times are monitored. There are further plans for continued customer engagement. We have a track record of delivering over 200 property acquisitions and have embedded learning from these into our processes.

How have you engaged stakeholders in testing the policy or proposals?

This policy aligns with the London Borough of Barnet's Housing Strategy 2015-2025 aim to 'Increase affordable housing available to homeless households'. Consultation on the Housing Strategy ran for 3 months from 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Additionally presentations were made to Barnet Homes Performance and Advisory Group, the Children's Partnership Board, the Youth Board, and the Health and Well Being Board.

## Action Plan

Please give an outline of what broad action you or any other bodies are taking to address any issues identified through the evidence.

Include here any or all of the following, based on your assessment

- Plans already under way or in development to address the issues you have identified.
- Arrangements for continued engagement of stakeholders.
- Arrangements for continued monitoring and evaluating the activity for its impact on different groups as the activity is implemented
- Arrangements you have put in place / need to be in place to communicate the outcome of your analysis.

Issue	Action	Target Date	Responsible
Ensure up-to-date tenant satisfaction information.	Review tenant satisfaction and carry out a programme of tenant satisfaction surveys on newly let properties.	1st November 2020	Acquisitions Programme Manager