

Quest no	Item No	Raised By	Question Raised	Answer
1	6	Mr Ben Samuel	<p>I live with my parents and have had a life-time of empty promises on housing. Numerous times you report what percentage will be affordable and parties sometimes put forward their preferred amounts such as 20% or 40% affordable. However this begs the question, affordable to whom? I presume that "housing people can afford" is a way of saying the same thing in a politically correct way or is it more a case of "housing landlords can afford"?</p> <p>Reading the definition of affordable housing (p 20 32) in the housing strategy, the phrase "80% of market rents" (maximum) bears remarkable similarity to the Conservative Mayor of London's definition. Were any other definitions considered in the draft housing strategy, for instance based on what tenants could afford?</p>	<p>The draft Housing Strategy sets out the council's intentions for rents to be charged for new and existing council homes. It is proposed that for new council homes and for new tenancies for existing council homes, rents will be charged at either 80% of average market rents or at local housing allowance levels (whichever is the lower) which determine the maximum rent that will be considered for housing benefit claims. The council also intends to develop proposals to increase rents to the same level for existing tenants over a period of time.</p> <p>Limiting rents to local housing allowance levels will mean that low income households will be entitled to receive assistance with their rent payments through the housing benefit system, ensuring that the rents for council homes remain affordable.</p> <p>A small number of larger non-working households may find that their overall entitlement to welfare benefits is capped at £500 a week. The council's approach to addressing this issue has been to help households into employment through the welfare benefits task force, which would mean that the cap will not apply.</p> <p>This policy means that rents for council homes will be in line with those for new affordable homes funded by the Greater London Authority in the draft London Housing Strategy, although the Mayor is also seeking some rents capped at 50% of average market rents with the aim of continuing to provide homes for households affected by the benefit cap. New affordable rented homes provided by housing associations in Barnet will generally have rents set in line with the Mayor's proposals.</p> <p>Other rent levels are not considered in the draft Housing Strategy</p>

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				<p>being presented to the Housing Committee, although an earlier draft that was considered by the Housing Committee Working Group did include a proposal for council rents to be set at 65% of the average market rent.</p> <p>The draft Housing Strategy will be fully consulted on before it is finalised by the Housing Committee in April 2015, which will provide an opportunity for residents and other stakeholders to provide their views on the proposals in the strategy, including the rents policy.</p>
2	6	Mr Ben Samuel	<p>Has the Council written up a report from the Leader's visit to the Stonegrove / Spur Road estate, about what went well, what could be improved next time, and where can this report be accessed?</p>	<p>A specific report on the visit isn't yet available. A response however in relation to the points raised about how regeneration has taken place on the Stonegrove/Spur Road Estates and lessons learned will be included in the annual regeneration report 2015/16 to be reported to committee in early 2015.</p>