

# Housing Strategy 2023-28 Consultation Report

## June 2023

### 1. Aim of the consultation

- 1.1 Barnet Council is introducing a new Housing Strategy to improve housing and homelessness within Barnet with the aim of ensuring that everyone has a safe, secure, affordable home where they can thrive. The Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in the borough, taking into account the priorities of the administration and the challenges and opportunities within the operating environment.
- 1.2 The themes of the Housing Strategy are:
- Prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers off the streets. *[Note: to be articulated through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy]*
  - Deliver the right homes in the right places.
  - Ensure safe, sustainable council housing.
  - Raise quality and standards in the private rented sector.
  - Support living well by promoting healthy homes and wellbeing.
- 1.3 As part of the development of the strategy, a consultation was held to seek residents' and stakeholders' feedback on the draft strategy. The Housing Strategy consultation ran for ten and a half weeks, from 5 April 2023 to 18 June 2023. It primarily consisted of an online survey on Engage Barnet. Supporting documents were also available on Engage Barnet, allowing interested parties to view the draft strategy.
- 1.4 A number of targeted focus groups were also held to give residents and partner agencies an opportunity to give feedback on the draft strategy.

### 2. Methodology

- 2.1 The questionnaire was available on the council's consultation webpage Engage Barnet, with paper copies available on request. The questionnaires asked respondents how much they agreed with the different priorities of the strategy. In total, 63 responses were received through Engage Barnet. There were free text boxes that allowed respondents to add in comments, including to note anything they thought was missing.
- 2.4 The consultation was well publicised through various mediums including:
- Email sent to all Private Registered Providers operating within the borough, encouraging them to review the proposals and respond to the consultation.
  - Email sent to key homelessness services partner agencies, encouraging them to review the proposals and respond to the consultation.
  - The council's social media channels, primarily on Twitter where the council has over 25,000 followers.
  - A paid Facebook and Instagram advertising campaign, which targeted people living in Barnet.
  - The Barnet Group's and its subsidiaries' social media channels, primarily on Twitter and Instagram where The Barnet Group has over 3,000 followers.
  - Prominent feature on the council's website and promoted in a press release following the review by the Housing and Growth Committee.

- Promoted in the council's Barnet First magazine, which is sent to all residents in the borough.
- Promoted in the council's Barnet Together CTN community news e-bulletin.
- Promoted in the Barnet Homes resident magazine atHome, which is distributed to over 13,000 homes.
- Promoted to involved residents by Barnet Homes.
- Promoted through a signature block in the emails of key frontline staff of the council and Barnet Homes as well as Labour councillors.
- Key council departments, managers, and staff from a range of stakeholder service areas were briefed on the proposed Housing Strategy and were given opportunity to provide feedback.

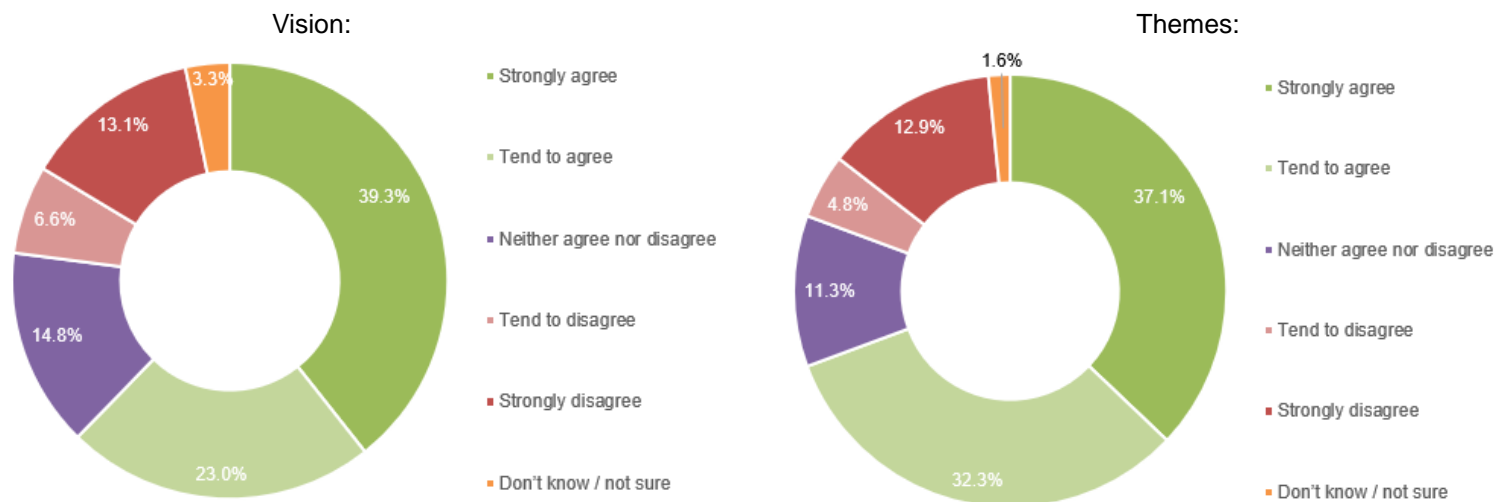
2.5 In total, there were 44 attendees at targeted focus groups; these included groups for council residents who have recently been housed, care leavers, adult social care clients, and key homelessness services partner agencies.

2.6 The Greater London Authority (GLA) was also invited to review the draft Housing Strategy and provide feedback.

### 3. Summary of key findings

3.1 The questionnaire asked respondents if they agreed with the vision stated in the strategy, with options of strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The majority (62.3%) agreed, whilst 19.7% disagreed. The questionnaire also asked respondents if they agreed with the themes stated in the strategy, with options of strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The majority (69.4%) agreed, whilst 17.7% disagreed.

3.2 Comments in support of the vision and themes highlighted a large number of concerns about a lack of affordable housing, as well as challenges in the private rented sector. Comments that highlighted gaps in or opposed the vision and themes raised concerns about overcrowding and overdevelopment, poor infrastructure or public services (including schools, GP surgeries, hospitals, street parking, road conditions, green spaces, policing), and anti-social behaviour. Many of the comments raised matters that do not fall under the scope of the Housing Strategy.



- 3.3 The questionnaire asked respondents if they believed the ambitions and areas of focus for each of the themes were clear, with options of very clear, quite clear, not that clear, not at all clear, and don't know. Across the five themes, the mean average agreement was 66.6%.
- 3.4 Respondents who stated that they felt the ambitions and areas of focus were not clear included isolated comments about a belief that the council will not be able to deliver its aims, concerns about infrastructure and public services (including green spaces, school places, overcrowding), concerns about the private rented sector, and concerns about the outgoing 2019-24 Housing Strategy. Many of the comments raised matters that do not fall under the scope of the Housing Strategy.
- 3.5 Respondents were also asked if they thought anything was missing from the five theme sections of the strategy. There were no clear trends, however comments received included concerns about a lack of affordable housing in the borough particularly in the private rented sector, concerns about regeneration, comments about what respondents felt was missing from other council strategies, comments about the Housing Allocation Scheme and how social housing is prioritised, and infrastructure, public services, and finance (including transport, overcrowding, policing, road conditions, schools, GPs, hospitals, green spaces, and energy prices, and mortgage rates). Many of the comments raised matters that do not fall under the scope of the Housing Strategy.
- 3.6 Overall, 69.1% of respondents felt the strategy is clear and easy to understand. 38.1% of respondents felt the draft strategy does not address the most important housing issues we face in Barnet over the next five years (33.3% said they feel it does), however the majority of comments regarding this raised matters that do not fall under the scope of the Housing Strategy, including public services and infrastructure, as well as matters that are addressed under other Barnet strategies.

3.7 Key words and phrases are summarised in the word cloud below.



3.8 The focus groups provided opportunity for discussion about the Housing Strategy and the other key housing-related strategies and policies that Barnet Council is currently reviewing. These enabled quality discussions about residents' aspirations and areas of concern, in addition to being an opportunity to explain the documents in more detail. The focus groups indicated good support for the aims of the Housing Strategy. Attendees stated concerns about the following matters that are covered by the Housing Strategy:

- Affordability of housing in Barnet.
- A need for wheelchair accessible homes.
- The importance of tenants living in social housing downsizing to more manageable properties.
- Concerns about sustainability and knowledge and skills, especially in the private rented sector and private ownership.
- Damp and mould.
- Empty homes.
- Quality of the private rented sector.
- Homelessness prevention, particularly the challenge of providing mental health support.

3.9 Discussions were also held with key council services that are affected by the Housing Strategy.

3.10 All of the comments received have been reviewed and fed back into the strategy. Whilst many of the comments from respondents concerned matters that do not fall directly under the scope of the Housing Strategy, some of these areas of concern are covered under other existing or planned council strategies or policies, including the Local Plan, Sustainability Strategy, Growth Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Highway Investment Strategy, Community Participation Strategy, and Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

3.10 Changes made to the strategy include:

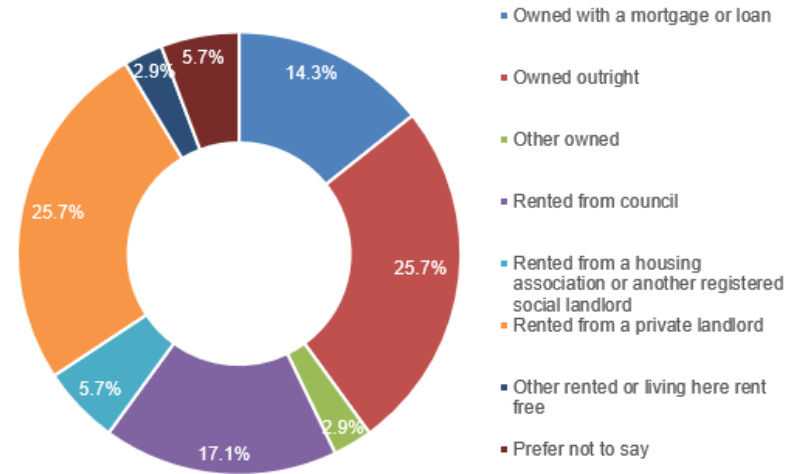
- Greater reference to the Growth Strategy and its role in shaping places and securing healthy, resilient, and cohesive communities.
- Greater reference to the diverse types of housing across all tenures that the borough aims to deliver through its Local Plan.
- A commitment to better understanding the needs of the Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller community within Barnet.

Comments will also be considered in the development of the supporting implementation plan.

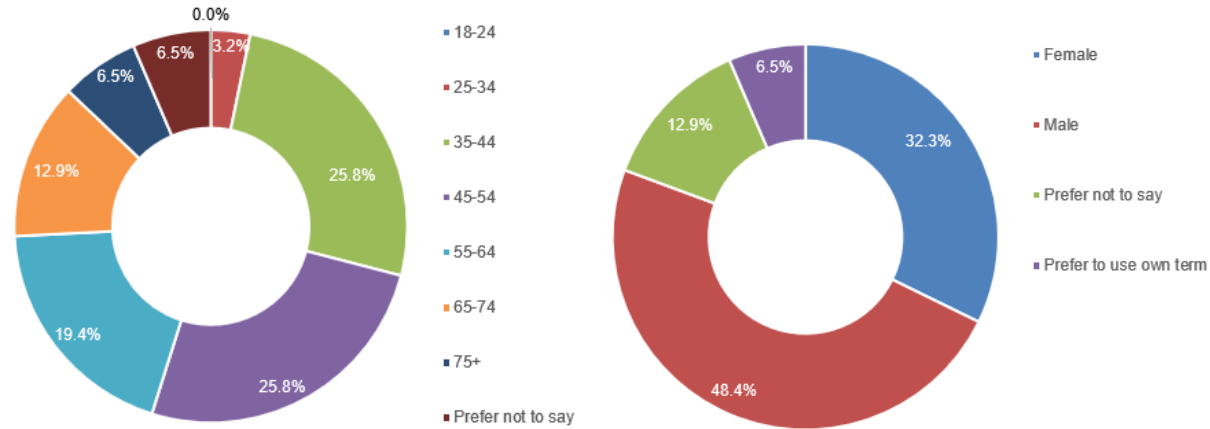
#### **4. Consultation questionnaire demographic characteristics**

4.1 Most of the 63 questionnaire respondents were residents of Barnet (76.6%), while others responded as representatives of a private registered provider (e.g., a housing association) (8.5%), representatives of a voluntary or community organisation (4.3%), representatives of a public sector organisation (4.3%), a Barnet business (2.1%), a person who works in the borough (2.1%), or a person who both lives and works in the borough (2.1%). 16 respondents chose to skip this question.

4.2 The housing tenure of respondents is shown below. A large proportion of respondents were home owners, with high representation also of those renting in the private sector and renting in the social housing sector. One respondent chose to skip this question.

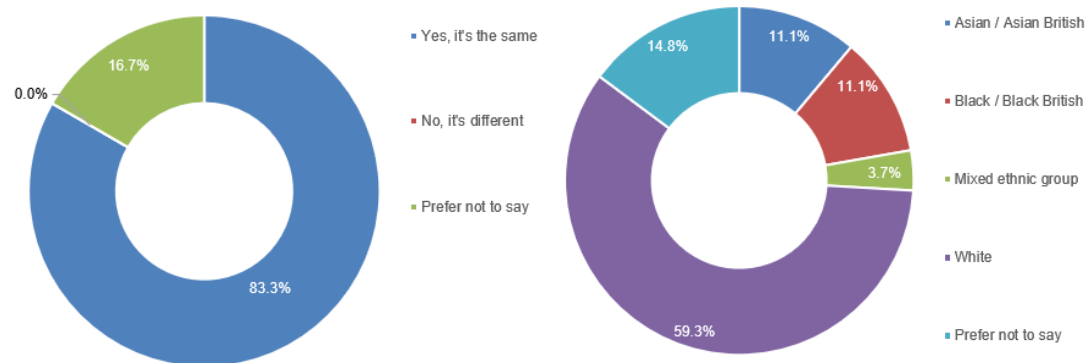


- 4.3 The council is required by law, under the Equality Act 2010, to monitor respondents against the protected characteristics. These questions were only asked of respondents who indicated they were residents of the borough (36 respondents in total).
- 4.4 There was a good range of ages within respondents, with no group higher than 25.8% (34-45 and 45-54 year olds). There were no recorded responses from 18-24 year olds, however 6.5% of respondents chose not to provide their age, and this was also partially addressed by discussing matters within the strategy with a focus group of care leavers. 5 respondents chose to skip this question.



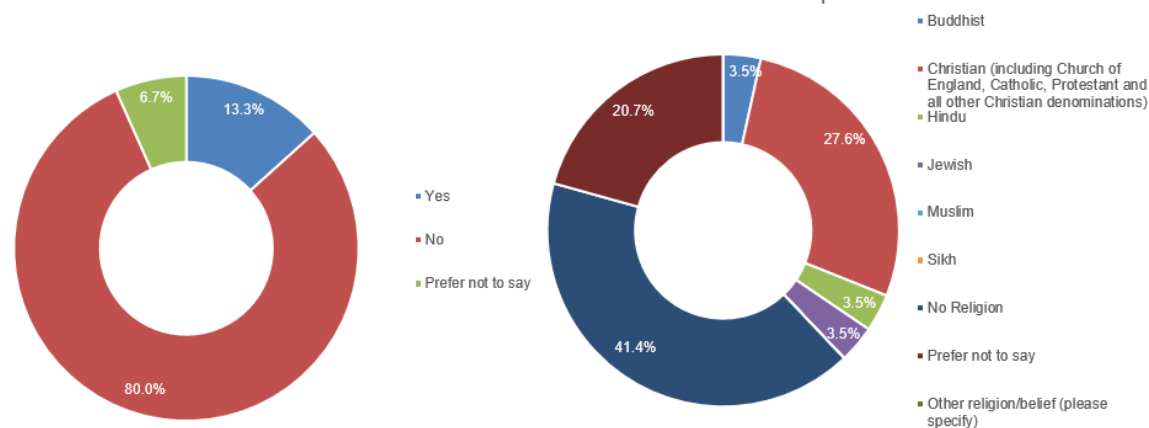
4.5 The results for sex / gender showed that most of the respondents were male, 32.3% were female, and 6.5% were non-binary, whilst 12.9% preferred not to say. 5 respondents chose to skip this question.

4.6 The majority of respondents, 83.3%, stated that their sex is the same sex they were assigned at birth, whilst 16.7% preferred not to say. 6 respondents chose to skip this question.



4.7 The largest race / ethnic group amongst respondents was White (59.3%), with 40.7% stating they were of a White British background. Other large groups included Asian - Indian (11.1%), Black – British (7.4%), and White Irish (7.4%). 9 respondents chose to skip this question.

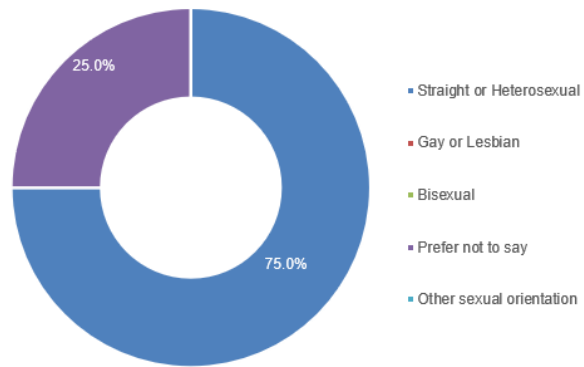
4.8 The proportion of respondents who considered themselves to have a disability was 13.3%, broadly comparable to the 12.8% of Barnet residents who identified themselves as being disabled under the Equality Act in the 2021 Census. 6 respondents chose to skip this question. Of those who responded that they consider themselves to have a disability, 75% stated that they have a mental illness, 25% stated that they have a hearing impairment, and 25% stated that they have a mobility impairment.



4.9 Of those who stated their religion or belief, 41.4% stated they have no religion or belief, 27.6% stated they are Christian, and 3.5% stated they are each Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish. 7 respondents chose to skip this question.

4.10 Of those who stated their sexual orientation, 75% stated they are heterosexual, and 25% preferred not to say. 8 respondents chose to skip this question.





**5. Conclusion**

5.1 The findings from the consultation overall show support for the proposed new Housing Strategy.

5.2 We thank all those who took the time to respond to the Housing Strategy consultation.