

Housing Strategy | 2023 - 2028



a council that cares for people, our places, and the planet

Contents

Foreword from Councillor Ross Houston, Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration	
Introduction	
Tackling the housing crisis	
Our vision for housing in Barnet	
Principles for how we will work	
Priority 1: prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers off the streets	
Priority 2: deliver the right homes in the right places	
Priority 3: ensure safe, sustainable council housing	
Priority 4: raise quality and standards in the private rented sector	
Priority 5: support living well by promoting healthy homes and wellbeing	
Next steps	

DRAFT

Foreword

Barnet is a great place where people take pride in their area, neighbours support one another, and diverse communities flourish. However, along with the rest of London, Barnet is facing an unprecedented housing crisis.

Incomes have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing, home ownership is out of reach for many residents in the borough, and private sector rents continue to rise. The cost-of-living crisis means that many households are struggling now more than ever, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic which placed enormous pressure on resources. A key council priority is support vulnerable people and households.

We know the shortage of genuinely affordable housing is a concern for Barnet residents. We share those concerns and are committed to addressing this issue.

Over the next five years, our Housing Strategy will shape our response to the range of significant challenges we face. Our vision is for everyone to have a safe, secure, and affordable home where they and their families can thrive.

Housing was central to Labour's manifesto for the 2022 local elections, and we have pledged to put in place an ambitious programme to deliver 1,000 new, genuinely affordable council homes within Barnet. We will also invest in the homes we own to keep residents safe and tackle issues such as damp and mould. We are committed to championing the rights of the growing number of Barnet residents who rent their homes privately. We want to make sure that everyone living in the borough can access good quality housing that meets their needs.

Earlier in 2023 we shared our draft Housing Strategy for your input. Thank you to every one of you who responded to that consultation; your involvement has been vital in shaping our final strategy and helping us to make sure it focuses on the things that are important to Barnet residents.

We are committed to doing all we can to make a difference to the people of Barnet in tackling the housing crisis. We cannot achieve our goals alone, and we firmly believe that national problems need national solutions. We will call upon central Government to increase investment in new homes, to urgently invest in the decarbonisation of existing housing as well as construction of sustainable new housing, to reduce the inequalities faced by so many, and to support local authorities with the funding and resource necessary to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live well.

I am confident that with determination, innovation, creativity, and strong partnership working we can rise to meet the challenges we face and deliver an approach to housing that makes a real difference to our residents. As Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration, I am pleased to introduce the borough's new Housing Strategy 2023-28 and I am excited about the opportunity it brings.

Councillor Ross Houston
Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration

Introduction

Everyone deserves a place to live. A home is not only a source of shelter, but a safe place to live, relax, work, and develop roots within a community. It is a protected place for children to grow up, play, and learn. Our housing ambitions are not just related to homes and bricks and mortar; we are focused on building communities and creating neighbourhoods where people feel safe and want to be. Barnet's Housing Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in the borough.

We do not work alone in the provision of housing services within Barnet, and we recognise and celebrate the significant contributions and achievements of our key partner organisations, including The Barnet Group, private registered providers of social housing, public and third sector organisations, and private developers. These partner organisations will continue to play a key role in the delivery of this strategy and its success is dependent upon sustained strong collaborative working.

Barnet Council is committed to making the borough fairer and tackling inequality, and for people in the borough to start well, live well, and age well. Good housing contributes to good physical and mental health and is an important factor in people's overall wellbeing. Substandard or insecure housing is a significant cause of health inequalities and, working in partnership, we need to do all we can to fight inequalities between different groups and make Barnet a fairer, more equal place in which to live.

London's housing crisis is felt most keenly by those who have no home at all, and Barnet, like all councils, faces a great challenge to reduce the harms associated with this. We will deliver our aims to prevent homelessness, ensure a sufficient supply of accommodation, and provide support for people who are or have been homeless through our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28, which is supported by this Housing Strategy.

The shortage of affordable housing creates significant challenges to reducing the number of households that are homeless. We know that some groups are disproportionately affected, and the shortage of suitable affordable housing most significantly affects those in need of larger family-sized homes and those who need a wheelchair-accessible home. At the time of writing this strategy, the cost-of-living crisis affects all residents in Barnet, in particular those households on low incomes with higher-than-average energy bills, and the ongoing housing crisis deepens its impact.

Barnet's population is growing, and particularly the proportion of residents who are older. We have a duty to help residents to remain independent within their own homes for as long as they wish to stay there. We also aspire to making sure Barnet is a place where people who have grown up here want and are able to stay and make their own lives, as well as welcoming new people to join our communities.

The legislative and regulatory landscape for housing has changed in recent years and will continue to evolve during the life of this strategy. The safety of the residents living in the council's housing stock is one of our highest priorities, and we will continue to invest in the building and fire safety of the homes we own. We will also be responsive to tackling issues such as damp and mould, whether this is in our own housing stock or through working with registered providers of social housing and private sector landlords in the borough to ensure all residents in Barnet live in a healthy home. During this period of unprecedented challenge and change, it is essential that our approach to delivering this strategy remains flexible and responsive, and that we continue to listen to and engage our residents.

In setting a vision for housing, we need to make sure it supports the broader aims for the borough as set out in Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026. A programme of transformation is underway to deliver our commitment to be a council that cares for people, our places, and the planet. Our strategy for housing must support the collective aims and help achieve our goals in all areas. This Housing Strategy plays a key role in achieving the ambitions within Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 to care for people by tackling inequalities, being family friendly, and living well, to care for our places by delivering quality, affordable homes, and to care for the planet by supporting our journey to net zero. It will also support us to deliver our community participation aims by empowering our communities, working in partnership on things they care about, and involving our residents in having a say and shaping the things we do and how we do them.

Tackling the housing crisis

There is not currently enough suitable housing in Barnet for everyone to have a safe, secure, and affordable home. We want Barnet's people and communities to thrive, and to achieve this we need to work with our partners to deliver solutions to a range of housing problems.

Barnet is the second most populated borough in London, with over 389,300 residents. The population is expected to grow to over 451,000 by 2041, placing further pressure on housing within the borough. Since 2011, the borough's population has grown by 9.2%, with an 18.3% increase in those aged over 65. The total increase was greater than that for the overall population of London (7.7%) and the overall population of England (6.6%).

Incomes in Barnet are relatively high compared to the rest of London; however, there is a wide gap between those with the highest incomes and those who live in poverty. The median income decreased between 2017 and 2021, indicating a squeeze on standards of living that is likely to be worsened by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

It is expensive, and becoming increasingly more expensive, to buy or privately rent a home in Barnet, with average house prices in October 2021 fifteen times the average income, and average rent prices higher than that of Outer London. Renting privately is less affordable than before, and private rents have more than doubled since 2011 from an average of £1,202 to £2,810 in 2019. As house prices have increased, the proportion of Barnet households relying on the private rented sector has more than doubled in the last 20 years, and now accounts for a third of the homes in the borough.

There is not enough social housing to meet the demand within Barnet. As of January 2023, there were over 3,000 households on the housing needs register waiting for permanent homes, and of these just over 1,800 households were homeless and living in suitable long-term temporary accommodation. A 'banding' system is used in the Housing Allocations Scheme, with Band 1 representing the highest priority households and Band 4 the lowest priority; priority is determined by individual needs and circumstances as set out in the scheme. Whilst the number of households on the housing needs register decreased slightly between April 2022 and December 2022, this was largely driven by a reduction in the number of households in Band 4 and in Band 4 in long-term temporary accommodation; there was an increase in the number of households in Bands 1, 2, and 3.

If Barnet were to not build or procure any additional social housing properties, based on the number of re-lets of social housing homes in Quarters 1 and 2 of 2022/23 it would take 6.5 years to provide a permanent social housing home to all those currently on the Housing Needs Register who need a studio or 1-bedroom home, 7.2 years to those who need a 2-bedroom home, 16.2 years to those who need a 3-bedroom home, and 32.7 years to those who need at least a 4-bedroom home. This

does not take into account the particular difficulties of securing suitable accommodation for those who require a wheelchair-adapted property, which are in very small supply.

Time (in years) it would take to provide social housing to all residents on the Housing Needs Register if the supply of social housing is not increased

	Studio & 1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Projected social housing re-lets 2022/23	184	116	48	8
Households in bands 1-4 (excluding long-term temporary accommodation)	528	213	336	149
Time to re-house (years)	2.9	1.8	7.0	18.7
Households in bands 1-4 (including long-term temporary accommodation)	1,195	840	779	261
Time to re-house (years)	6.5	7.2	16.2	32.7

The council’s social housing stock is managed by its arms-length management organisation, Barnet Homes, which is part of the council’s local authority trading company, The Barnet Group. Homelessness remains high in Barnet, although in September 2022 Barnet Homes had successfully reduced the number of households living in temporary accommodation to the lowest it has been in a decade. This was a considerable achievement at a time when the number of households living in temporary accommodation across London increased by around 70%. However, with challenges in the available supply of not just social housing but also suitable and affordable private sector housing and homes for private ownership, even though we have improved how we support people earlier on we face a significant challenge to continue delivering these positive outcomes for households in crisis.

Our vision for housing in Barnet

Our vision is that everyone has a safe, secure, affordable home where they can thrive. Our approach is focused on five themes that shape the key priorities and actions that will help us to achieve this vision.

In developing this strategy, we have reviewed housing needs and supply, performance, and the resources available to the council and its partners. We have also taken into account the Mayor’s London Housing Strategy. This Housing Strategy supports an overarching transformation programme across the council, and will support and is supported by other council strategies including Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, the Barnet Plan, the Tenancy Strategy, the Sustainability Strategy, the Growth Strategy, the Children and Young People’s Plan, the Adult Social Care Reform Plan, and the Right Home commissioning plan.



As well as making sure our own approach and actions drive us towards our vision, we must call on central government to help us address Barnet’s housing needs. In all that we do we are committed to providing a strong lobbying voice to help inform the Government on the changes that are needed to provide better, more affordable homes, improve the quality and condition of existing homes,

improve building and fire safety, improve the sustainability of housing, and increase flexibility around borrowing and the management of grant funding. We will do this individually and as part of regional groups through responses to consultations, calls for evidence, and commissioned pieces of work.

Further information about the context in which we are working can be found in our supporting evidence base.

Principles for how we will work

Meeting diverse needs and challenging inequalities

We want Barnet's people and communities to prosper, and for the borough's young people to have the best start in life and the right support when they need it. A safe, secure home can help to provide this and ensure they can achieve their potential.

Equality is at the foundation of all that we do. We aspire for Barnet to be a borough where all communities are treated equally and with understanding and respect, and we will work to empower residents to look after their own homes and be active in their community. We will proactively tackle inequalities by actively listening to and considering different perspectives and needs when designing our services. We recognise that everyone's experience is not the same, and that it is easier for some to access services and take advantage of opportunities, and we will work to improve how we care for people according to their individual needs and circumstances.

We know there is more we can do to fight inequality, so that residents have access to quality services and the right support at the right time and based on their needs, and to ensure that no one is held back. We are committed to fighting these inequalities by working together with local communities and our partners to break the barriers for access to a good life. Wherever we find that people have experienced inequality or disproportionate impact due to their background or identity we will tackle this.

Sustainability

In May 2022, we declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in Barnet. Housing is the cornerstone of our commitment to sustainability, and a key part of our work to future-proof our borough, safeguard our environment, and enrich and protect our green spaces and biodiversity for future generations to come. Sustainability is at the heart of what we will do in delivering this Housing Strategy to take action to tackle the pressing environmental challenges affecting our borough and go further and faster than ever before to make Barnet a more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable borough.

Working in partnership with residents

We want to be a council that listens. We aim to enable and empower our residents, communities, and partners, and to work together for a better Barnet. We are committed to providing excellent resident experiences in all that we do, and to removing barriers and improving access, as well as acting on residents' concerns and involving them in decision-making. We know that residents of all ages and backgrounds and community groups have the experience, skills, and insight to improve their lives and environment, and that we will get better solutions for problems residents and communities face by designing them in partnership with those communities.

In all that we do, we care, and we want Barnet's residents to have access to the right support at the right time to enable people and communities to prosper. As part of this, in delivering this strategy we are committed to community-led regeneration, co-design of local services, and working in partnership on the things residents care about.

Priority 1: Prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers off the streets.

We will deliver this priority through our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28, which has the following aims:

Prevent homelessness by focusing on identifying those who are most at risk, tackling the root causes of homelessness, working in partnership to ensure early intervention and 'upstreaming' this where possible, preventing recurring homelessness, and improving awareness, advice, and information.

Ensure a sufficient supply of accommodation by focusing on accessing social housing and the private rented sector, making effective use of the council's housing assets, continuing to try to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, bringing empty properties back into use, and looking to address specialist needs including supported housing, domestic abuse, and accessible properties.

Provide support for people who are or have been homeless by focusing on working in partnership provide support, particularly to single people at particular risk, rough sleepers, families, victims of domestic abuse, and households in temporary accommodation. This includes housing-related support and personal support including with domestic abuse, mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty, debt, and unemployment.



Priority 2: Deliver the right homes in the right places.

Barnet has a rising and ageing population, high house prices and private rent levels, and a lack of genuinely affordable housing to meet need, with growing challenges in the supply of accommodation. Barnet's Local Plan sets the policy framework and targets for new homes, and this Housing Strategy focuses on how we will deliver new, genuinely affordable homes in the right places to meet diverse needs. The delivery of this priority will help us to achieve the aim of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure a sufficient supply of accommodation, and our sustainability and net zero goals under our Sustainability Strategy.

Our plans for growth set out that good quality housing that is attractive to all generations and is supported by the right infrastructure such as schools, community and health facilities, open spaces, and access to transport and employment opportunities is key to creating healthy, resilient, and cohesive communities. Delivering new housing in areas with good public transport connections; with the focus on town centres and major road corridors will be key to this.

There is a need for a range of affordable housing within the borough, including adaptable and supported housing for people with care, support, and accessibility needs, and general needs homes to rent and buy. The demand for social housing in Barnet far exceeds the available supply of affordable housing, so there is also a need to ensure appropriate temporary accommodation is provided for households in crisis to alleviate and prevent homelessness.

From 2018 to February 2023, 1,461 affordable homes for rent have been developed within the borough.

Delivery of affordable homes in Barnet from 2018 to February 2023

Provider Type	Number of Homes	Rent Level
Barnet Council (Barnet Homes)	53	Affordable Rent
Opendoor Homes	295	Affordable Rent
Opendoor Homes	15	London Affordable Rent
Other Housing Associations	404	Affordable Rent
Other Housing Associations	146	Social Rent
Other Housing Associations	57	London Affordable Rent
Total Rented	970	
Opendoor Homes	6	Shared Ownership
Other Housing Associations	485	Shared Ownership
Total Affordable Home Ownership	491	

Homes to be delivered in Barnet on regeneration sites (affordable and total)

Regeneration sites (affordable housing)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Total
Dollis Valley	4	89	7							100
Granville Road		46								46
West Hendon	78	72	34	96						280
Grahame Park		209			403	225	72		366	1,257
Total	82	416	105	160	505	225	72		566	1,701

Regeneration sites (all tenure)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Total
Dollis Valley	4	89	71	64						228
Housing type: Market			64	64						128
Housing type: S/O			7							7
Housing type: A/R	4	89								93
Granville Road		132								132
Housing type: Market		86								86
Housing type: S/O		46								46
West Hendon	324	161	115	116						716
Housing type: Market	246	89	81	20						436
Housing type: SO/SE	78	72	34	96						280
Grahame Park		209			150	354	72	106	166	1,057
Housing type: Social/LAR		149							88	237
Housing type: A/R					253				200	453
Housing type: S/O		60				225	72		78	435
Housing type: Market					402	129		106	200	837
Total	328	591	186	180	150	354	72	106	166	2,133

The regeneration of Dollis Valley, Grahame Park, and West Hendon is improving the quality of homes and public realm and creating places for residents that integrate better with surrounding areas. These schemes will continue to be delivered, with over 3,000 homes still to complete.

The loss of existing social housing also impacts upon the available supply of affordable housing, with fewer council homes replaced than sold each year. The number of council homes sold under the Government's Right to Buy increased each year from 2017 to 2019. Although the number reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 69 council homes were sold in 2022, a significant increase compared to previous years.

At the same time as refreshing Barnet's Housing Strategy we are reviewing the Housing Allocation Scheme and Tenancy Strategy. Through these we will make sure council tenants have lifetime tenancies that give them the security and confidence to put down roots and feel a part of their community, make sure regeneration benefits existing residents first and foremost through a new local lettings policy, and offer those in housing need more choice about where they live by increasing the number of offers of housing we will make from one to two.

Our ambitions

We will continue to progress and develop plans for the delivery of new homes on council land, with an aim of delivering 1,000 new council homes to be let at 50% or less of the average market rent.

We will ensure new homes meet the diverse needs of Barnet's residents by increasing the provision of supported and wheelchair accessible housing to meet demand, particularly for those with mobility needs. At least 10% of new council homes will meet higher standards of wheelchair accessibility, and we will seek to be more targeted in accessible properties' bedroom size and the flexibility of the accommodation.

We will work in partnership to continue to seek other opportunities to deliver new homes across tenures, including through our delivery partner Opendoor Homes, such as acquiring homes on the open market for rent as social housing, or exploring other, innovative solutions to deliver the different types of homes that are needed for social housing and home ownership.

We will ensure all new homes are designed to a high-quality standard with a strong emphasis on sustainability.

How we will deliver

Delivering new, genuinely affordable homes

Delivering more quality, affordable homes in the borough is a priority for the council that will help us continue to prioritise caring for people, our places, and the planet. We will use the framework of Barnet's new Local Plan to ensure the right mix of homes is built, and to maximise the supply of affordable homes. To deliver the right homes in the right places, we need to ensure we understand the tenures being delivered across all development within the borough. This includes having a clearer view of the type and size of homes that are needed and are being delivered, and the council seeking to influence the supply from registered providers and private developers against the levels of housing need. We will undertake a mapping exercise to further this work and will seek to learn from good practice from other London boroughs. We will also work in partnership to ensure a strong understanding of the low-cost home ownership and other rent products that are available, such as Build to Rent and Shared Living Accommodation, and we will look to take an innovative approach to delivering a range of housing to meet the diverse needs of the borough.

We must be open to delivering homes in new and innovative ways that help us ensure every avenue to address Barnet's housing issues is being explored, and as part of this we will investigate examples of good practice and innovative housing models that could be adopted in Barnet through the provisions of our Local Plan and could provide suitable housing of all tenures for people with a range of needs and tenure requirements, including affordable housing. We will also take into account specific needs such as student accommodation as required. At the time of developing this strategy, housing products that could be considered innovative include modular housing, intergenerational housing, community or self-build, and discounted and intermediate housing including First Homes. We recognise that this landscape is constantly evolving and that not all innovative approaches will be right for the borough, and we therefore need to be flexible in our approach to deciding which housing products should be explored. We will regularly review and publish position statements on levels of housing need to give guidance to developers and establish the potential housing types that may be explored.

We will also review whether there is a basis for exploring further Community Infrastructure Levy relief through a Discretionary Social Housing Policy to stimulate and incentivise new discounted affordable housing products that provide homes at 80% of market value in perpetuity.

We have committed to delivering 1,000 new council homes to be let at 50% or less of the average market rent. As part of the 'Barnet family', Opendoor Homes (a charitable private registered provider of social housing that is a subsidiary of Barnet Homes), will support us to reach our target. We recognise that the current environment is challenging for delivering new homes, with the viability and deliverability of schemes being compromised by increasing build costs and rising inflation, as well as increasing pressures on the Housing Revenue Account to deliver this ambition. To achieve our commitment, we will look to:

- secure additional grant, where possible, to change the rents on homes being delivered from Barnet Affordable Rents to London Affordable Rents or social rents;
- explore entrepreneurial cost-mitigating solutions, including delivering through partnerships or joint ventures with contractors, developers, or Private Registered Providers within the borough; and
- commission external consultants to ensure all potential funding and delivery routes have been explored and understand best practice examples across London.

When delivering new homes, we want to create thriving, cohesive, successful communities. It is important that diverse communities are supported through the provision of a range of homes, and on larger schemes we will explore the potential to deliver mixed tenure, including providing opportunities to help people into home ownership through shared ownership and other affordable home ownership schemes. We will also continue to review our land and asset optimisation to ensure we are making the most effective use of the council's land.

The supply of affordable accommodation from the private rented sector is contracting, and we are aware that a potentially increasing number of private landlords may be looking to leave the market due to challenges including rising mortgage rates, rising quality standards and costs associated with these, the cost-of-living crisis and welfare reform affecting tenants' ability to pay their rent, and high retrofitting costs to meet net zero targets. Whilst we will continue to review the incentives we offer to landlords to help secure accommodation for those who are most in need, we will also monitor the market and may take opportunities to acquire properties for use as temporary accommodation where we are able to identify a clear plan and funding for any works needed to bring them up to the required standards.

Delivering high quality, affordable homes in Barnet

The council's local authority trading company, The Barnet Group, is committed to providing good quality, contemporary new homes across the borough. These include homes for social rent, Affordable Rent, and shared ownership, as well as extra care schemes.

Barnet Homes

In addition to having 236 general needs homes on site at the time of writing this strategy, Barnet Homes is dedicated to supporting Barnet residents with extra care needs. Opened in 2019, Ansell Court in Mill Hill is the borough's first publicly owned extra care scheme and provides dedicated support for residents in 53 individual homes. A second extra care scheme on the former Stag House site in Burnt Oak (pictured right) is due to open in summer 2023, and a third scheme is under construction on the Fosters Estate in Hendon.



Opendoor Homes

Through its charitable Private Registered Provider Opendoor Homes, The Barnet Group is building homes for affordable rent on underused sites such as disused garages. Completed in summer 2021, Gracie House in East Finchley represents the biggest single construction of social housing in Barnet in a generation. The 50 new homes provide modern and affordable living for its residents.



Schemes like Burgundy Court (pictured left) in Finchley (14 homes) and Pyrus Court (pictured below) in East Finchley (ten homes) have been built with eye-catching contemporary design, which remains faithful to the architecture of the surrounding areas, and contribute to a programme which will deliver 320 new homes in total.

The Artisan in Cricklewood is a boutique development of 31 new homes, of which six will be for shared ownership, and will be the first scheme to contribute to the council's target of 1,000 new homes for social rent.



Development that empowers communities

We don't want to just deliver new homes in Barnet; we also want to make sure we are building communities where people can thrive. It is essential that our new homes are supported by the right infrastructure, including good transport connections, access to jobs, green spaces, local businesses, schools, community and health facilities, and state-of-the-art digital infrastructure, and this will form an important part of our planning processes and growth and regeneration strategies.

We know that building can be disruptive for local residents, so we will consult and engage with them throughout the process, working in partnership to co-design our new developments, whilst being realistic about what disruption there may be and how we will seek to mitigate against any intrusion.

We want to ensure any regeneration of estates within the borough is focused on building social cohesion, improving environmental conditions, and improving housing. In delivering these schemes a co-design approach will ensure communities are involved from the outset in helping to shape design proposals, and residents have the opportunity to contribute their ideas and detail their aspirations. We will work with our design teams to ensure we use plain language, and that a range of ways are provided for residents to engage in the design process, including making sure residents can see how their feedback has been considered and how this has been incorporated into proposals. Barnet's communities are diverse, and to ensure we communicate with all the groups that may have an interest in these schemes, including the young and those who may not have English as their first language, we will use a multi-media approach aimed at meeting a variety of needs, and we will hold events to celebrate existing communities and shaping their futures.

Understanding and better meeting housing needs

A big factor in keeping people well and promoting independence is living in a home that works for them. Partnership working across the council and its partners is essential to making sure we are better able to meet the diverse needs of housing applicants within the borough, and we aim to increase the number of homes that meet residents' care and support needs. We also know that to provide family friendly housing, we need to work to increase the supply of affordable larger, family-sized homes.

There is presently higher demand for wheelchair-accessible social housing homes than are available. As of February 2023, there were 46 households on the Housing Needs Register that were in need of a wheelchair-accessible home, with the greatest need within direct offers or Band 1 (the highest priority group) (70%, or 32 households), and the highest level of need being for a 3-bedroom property (41%, or 19 households). The households currently on the Housing Needs Register have waited for an average of 1.6 years for an offer of suitable accommodation. In 2020/21 eight wheelchair-accessible adaptations were completed, and two were completed in 2021/22.

We will support Barnet Homes and our housing delivery partner Opendoor Homes to ensure at least 10% of new homes meet higher standards of wheelchair accessibility. At the time of writing this strategy, Opendoor Homes has plans to deliver 34 wheelchair accessible homes, and Greater London Authority-funded new build schemes for the council, delivered by Barnet Homes, include the development of 11 wheelchair accessible homes including larger wheelchair accessible homes which are in demand. Opendoor Homes will also continue to explore options for adapting homes through its acquisitions programme, with 5 homes presently being adapted. To ensure the continued supply of wheelchair accessible and adaptable homes, we will ensure planning for provision is incorporated in the design stage of Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes new build plans, as well as in the business case for acquiring new properties. Housing and Adult Social Care will also work in partnership to ensure the demand for accessible homes is well-understood, and to make the case for land and funding decisions to help meet housing needs.

At the time of writing this strategy, the council requires all new homes in the borough to be accessible and adaptable, complying with M4 (2) of the Building Regulations 2015. We also require 10% of new homes to meet M4 (3) of the Building Regulations 2015 standards for wheelchair user dwellings, however we recognise that this requirement is not exclusive to affordable homes, and that many M4 (3) homes are sold on the open market. We will work with partners to explore ways to increase the supply of wheelchair user homes for use as affordable housing, and to develop to the enhanced M4 (3) standard, such as including automated doors, to ensure presently unmet need within the borough is addressed.

There is a range of needs within Barnet that are challenging to meet with limited supply of affordable housing, including for young people leaving care, people with care and support needs, and people with health needs. There are no easy solutions to these challenges, and our services will need to work in partnership and cooperate to understand pressing levels of need and determine a fair and equitable approach to providing specialised affordable accommodation. To help facilitate targeted programmes, we will apply for additional grant where available from the Greater London Authority or Central Government to help meet specialist housing needs within the borough.

Barnet Homes will continue to work closely with Children's and Family Services to develop innovative solutions to increase the supply of suitable accommodation for young people leaving care, including exploring a range of options to increase affordability and maximise the likelihood of positive tenancy sustainment such as shared accommodation where this is suitable.

Barnet Homes will also work closely with Adult Social Care to ensure specialised housing needs are understood and delivered within the programme of increasing the supply of affordable accommodation. We will look to set up a multi-service working group aimed at reviewing existing supply and housing stock and levels of need, to explore in partnership what we need more of and how we can increase the supply of supported housing for older and disabled residents across all tenures including in the private rented sector and home ownership. Adult Social Care's The Right Home commissioning plan will set out the council's commissioning intentions for accommodation and support services for adults with additional needs, including those who are aged over 65+ with dementia and learning disabilities, and those aged 18-64 with learning disabilities and autism, physical disabilities and sensory impairment, and/or mental health needs.

We recognise that many households that have support needs and/or require aids and adaptations to ensure their accommodation is suitable for their needs live in the private rented sector or are homeowners. Our Adult Social Care The Right Home commissioning plan will set out our vision for and approach to increasing the range of accommodation and support services commissioned in the borough to better meet needs. Through the Adult Social Care Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy we will work with disabled people to co-produce design guidance for accessible housing.

We are committed to continuing to be responsive to the needs of and supporting and empowering refugees and asylum seekers within the borough. In January 2023, Barnet made a public commitment to work towards becoming a Borough of Sanctuary. This means that we will work with our statutory partners, the voluntary and community sector, and faith groups to make sure that those feeling displacement and persecution are welcomed and able to integrate well into and thrive in Barnet. A key challenge for us in this area is securing suitable housing, particularly for very large families. We will work with our partners including the private rented sector to meet the housing needs of refugees, and we will look to secure available funding from Central Government to support this work.

We will work in partnership to improve our understanding of the needs of the Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller community within Barnet, including identifying any need for provision of culturally

appropriate accommodation or to seek funding for new sites so that we can take steps to meet this through our approach to planning.

Tackling over- and under-occupation

Where households have more bedrooms than they need, we will support our tenants to ‘downsize’ to more suitable properties so that we can use our existing housing stock more efficiently and provide family homes to those who are in need. We have achieved some success to date in our ‘Fresh Start’ scheme, with 144 households supported to downsize to smaller properties, freeing them up for households on the Housing Needs Register that needed a larger property. We will review the incentives and support we offer and monitor the success of our scheme to ensure we are able to maximise its success, with the aim of particularly encouraging trade-downs from 3-bedroom to 1-bedroom properties, and 4-bedroom to 2-bedroom properties.

Number of homes freed up under the ‘Fresh Start’ scheme

Year	2-bedrooms	3-bedrooms	4-bedrooms	5-bedrooms
2019/20	30	23	4	
2020/21	17	11	1	1
2021/22	15	15	2	
2022/23			36	

Buying back homes sold through the Right to Buy

Whilst the Right to Buy scheme, which is governed by the Housing Act 1985, gives social housing tenants the opportunity to purchase their home at a discount, it has contributed to a major decline in the number of social housing properties across the country. It is becoming increasingly challenging for Barnet Homes, on the behalf of the council, to purchase homes on the open market due to the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account and high interest rates; however, we will seek to put in place a viable and sustainable scheme to, wherever possible, buy back former council homes that have been sold under the right to buy, to help increase the supply of social housing within the borough. Where grant is available to support this, we will seek funding. Barnet Homes presently has plans to purchase 60 homes with support from funding by the Greater London Authority.

Bringing empty homes back into use

Homes being left unoccupied can have a detrimental impact on the local community, and reduces the available accommodation in Barnet at a time when homes are very much in need. There are currently over 2,000 long-term empty homes (for six months or more) in the borough, and over 2,000 properties registered as second homes. Our experience shows that these can sometimes be incorrectly registered empty properties. Since 2019, through advice, enforcement, and grants, the council has worked with owners to bring 525 empty homes back into residential use.

Barnet’s Empty Property Grant scheme is intended to support homeowners within the borough to bring empty properties back into use to be occupied by people in housing need, to provide a source of income to those going into care and assist people to return home from care. The scheme is presently underused, and we will explore ways to make it more attractive. In recognition of rising build costs, we will review the level of grant that can be made available, taking into consideration how empty homes within the borough could potentially be used to help meet the unmet need for adapted properties. We will continue to take the appropriate enforcement action including Compulsory Purchase or Empty Dwelling Management Orders where appropriate to ensure that properties do not remain empty for long periods of time. Our Enforcement team will also work closely with the Council Tax department to ensure data on empty properties is accurately recorded.

Tackling housing fraud

We will continue to work to increase housing fraud detection rates to ensure the best possible use is made of the limited social housing within the borough. Our Corporate Anti-Fraud Team will

implement robust counter-fraud measures to identify all fraudulent activity with the aim of safeguarding the council's housing stock.

Ensuring high-quality, sustainable development

It is essential that we ensure all new builds are designed to a high-quality standard with a strong emphasis on sustainability that takes into consideration residents' needs by delivering energy-efficient solutions. Our Local Plan sets out how we will ensure all new homes in Barnet will be constructed to zero-carbon standards, as well as how we require good design of new homes. We will ensure that emerging development standards, such as the Future Homes Standard which will require CO2 emissions produced by new homes to be 75-80% lower than those built to current standards from 2025, are incorporated into our requirements and form the basis of our own development standards where we are building new homes.

We will drive high standards for the design of new homes through Barnet Homes' and Opendoor Homes' new build schemes, which follow the higher sustainability standard of the Mayor's design guide to meet grant requirements.

We want to help enable development across the borough to meet stretching sustainability standards as part of our approach to achieving net zero. We will regularly engage with private developers and our regeneration partners to understand where they could do more without the viability of schemes being detrimentally affected, and to enable the sharing of good practice to help raise standards and quality within Barnet.

We will comply with the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995's requirement for all local authorities in England to submit reports to the Secretary of State demonstrating what energy conservation measures they have adopted to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation within their area.

Brent Cross Town – a net zero carbon town by 2030

The Brent Cross Cricklewood programme is the biggest redevelopment and growth programme Barnet Council has ever undertaken. It is one of the Mayor of London's key growth projects and amongst the most ambitious across Europe.

The currently underused industrial land will transform into a vibrant new town called Brent Cross Town, which is an £8bn development that is being delivered in partnership by Barnet Council and Related Argent at the heart of the Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration scheme. Brent Cross Town will provide up to 6,700 new homes including affordable, private sale, and private rental homes, 3 million square feet of new offices generating up to 27,000 jobs, as well as improved schools, new parks, and community facilities. The scheme is also partnering with Sheffield Hallam University, which is scheduled to open a campus in Brent Cross Town in 2025/26 with an aim of reaching a target of up to 5,000 students by 20230, giving people a greater choice of local higher education.

Major road and public transport improvements are also included in the redevelopment programme, as well as new cycling, walking, and bus routes. A new station on the Thameslink line, Brent Cross West, is expected to open in Autumn 2023 and will be the first major new mainline station in London in over a decade. The new station, which is part of the redevelopment programme, will improve local connections to central London and beyond, connecting passengers to King's Cross in just 12 minutes.



We have committed to the Brent Cross Town development being a net zero carbon town by 2030. The development includes an on-site energy centre and one of the largest air source heat pump installations in Europe, which will provide low-carbon heating and cooling to homes and offices in the new town. The planned 6,700 new homes will be built with low-carbon construction. They will have low carbon heating and all landlord supplied energy will come from renewable sources.

Priority 3: Ensure safe, sustainable council housing.

We are a landlord to over 9,000 Barnet households and the freeholder to a further approximately 3,500 leasehold properties. These homes are managed on the council's behalf by Barnet Homes, which provides all property- and tenancy-management services.

Nationally there has been a heightened focus on fire safety since the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017. A range of new regulatory and legislative requirements have been introduced over the past two years, including the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022, both of which introduce reforms to give residents more rights, powers, and protections to ensure homes are safer.

We have made significant investment in our stock to achieve the Decent Homes Standard, which is the Government's minimum standard for the quality and state of repair of a home. Based on recent stock condition survey data of 80% of the retained housing stock, as of January 2023, 99% of the council's stock met the Decent Homes Standard.

There is no more government funding for stock investment, so budget pressures mean we have to prioritise how we use our limited resources in the most effective and efficient way. The safety of those living in our homes is one of our highest priorities, and we are committed to ensuring high standards of safety and quality in our existing council homes, and to investing in and improving our council housing stock for current and future residents.

We are also committed to ensuring our new and existing housing stock is sustainable by reducing its carbon footprint and increasing its energy efficiency, and we recognise that measures to retrofit properties may have a positive impact upon our tenants in light of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. In May 2022, Barnet Council declared a climate emergency. Building emissions account for roughly 60% of the borough's carbon emissions, and we know that bringing our housing stock up to the highest sustainability standards and ensuring new homes are designed to a high quality with a strong emphasis on sustainability will make a significant contribution to achieving our net zero carbon commitments.

Our ambitions

We will continue to invest in fire and building safety to keep council residents safe in their homes.

We will ensure and improve the quality of council housing in Barnet.

We will tackle the climate emergency through increasing the energy efficiency of our existing homes and working to achieve the council's zero carbon targets.

How we will deliver

Ensuring the safety of Barnet's housing blocks

We are committed to keeping our residents safe, adhering to safety regulations including the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022, and investing in and improving our council stock for current and future residents. Barnet Homes' Asset Management Strategy sets out how the council's housing assets will be used in the best way possible, ensuring the safety of our homes, blocks, and estates.

Meeting enhanced safety standards increases the challenge of providing services on a tight budget; however, we have made considerable investment in building and fire safety over the past six years, with strengthened structures and resources to meet the new regulatory and legislative obligations.

Through our £52m fire safety delivery programme Barnet Homes has delivered a range of safety works including cladding removal and recladding, category 1 high priority works and additional fire safety works to high rise buildings, installation of sprinkler systems, works to low and medium rise blocks, and the replacement of composite fire doors.

We will continue to work with the Government and the London Fire Brigade to ensure the safety of our homes, and to invest in our buildings to keep our residents safe, ensuring we comply with the regulatory framework for fire and building safety. As a fundamental part of our approach, we will ensure the resident voice is heard and is at the heart of our decision-making.

Providing high quality council homes

We know the standard of our repairs and maintenance service has the biggest effect on residents' quality of life, and that residents are concerned about the safety and condition of their homes. Whilst Barnet Homes' rolling stock condition surveys provide confidence that our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, we must continue to invest in the condition of our homes to ensure minimum standards are met and wherever possible exceeded. The Government is currently reviewing the Decent Homes Standard, and we will ensure adequate resources and investment are prioritised so we can be responsive to any new requirements once the revised standard has been published.

Living with damp and mould can have a serious impact on tenants' health and wellbeing. Most of our tenants live in homes that are largely free from damp and mould; however, we know it is a problem for many households. Through our stock condition surveys we have a good understanding of the condition of our properties, which enables Barnet Homes to identify and address these issues promptly and effectively. We take damp and mould very seriously, and following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report on damp and mould in November 2021, Barnet Homes has made improvements to the way it handles damp and mould cases to implement a zero-tolerance approach. This includes providing training to all operational frontline staff who visit tenants' homes, incorporating an assessment of any current respiratory illness in household members, re-surveying and identifying a schedule of works for all properties with 'moderate' damp and mould, and providing additional advice to tenants about how to avoid damp and mould and deal with 'slight' cases.

We are committed to proactively dealing with damp and mould where it occurs in our properties based on the knowledge we have about their condition, as well as responding swiftly where residents approach Barnet Homes about an issue. In early 2023, the council agreed to an investment of £2.2m to address the known issues of Category 2 damp and mould across the housing stock, some of which will be used to resource Barnet Homes' new Healthy Homes team within its Repairs service to manage damp and mould cases and continue to work closely with tenants to resolve these issues. Barnet Homes also started an awareness campaign to improve tenants' awareness including providing tailored advice to households, and under the fifth priority of this strategy we have set out further work we will do across the borough to tackle this issue. We will consider any need for additional investment from the Housing Revenue Account where it is possible to do so, and we will aim to learn from good practice approaches to dealing with damp and mould in the properties we own.

Achieving sustainability targets for existing homes

Housing is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in the country. We are committed to achieving our sustainability targets by retrofitting our social housing to help tackle climate change

and fuel poverty. In delivering our Housing Strategy we will aim to meet the national carbon zero and sustainability targets, as well as those set locally within our Sustainability Strategy.

We face a monumental challenge to meet these targets, which sit against a landscape of increased fire and building safety regulation, and a significant shortage of affordable homes to address the housing crisis. The number, type, age, and current efficiency of our council housing stock means an enormous retrofit operation will be required to meet the national targets of net zero carbon by 2050 and achieve a C rating on Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) across all homes by 2030. Locally, we have committed to achieving EPC rating C by 2027 and EPC rating B by 2030.

In November 2022, we commissioned a study to understand the emissions baseline of the borough, the potential routes to achieve net zero, the cost, and the most impactful decarbonisation options. This found that the estimated budgetary shortfall related to our housing stock is between £388m and £538m for achieving the UK target to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to emission levels in 1990. Barnet Homes also commissioned analysis of the housing stock to produce its Asset Management Strategy for 2022-27, which found that for the 80% of the housing stock that had been surveyed, 42% was achieving EPC C, 1.9% was achieving EPC A or B, and 56% was achieving EPC D or lower, with the majority of properties (49.8%) achieving EPC D, which is consistent with averages for dwellings in England. Based on a decarbonisation estimate of £42,000 per property, it will cost around £337m to address the council's housing stock.

The council is committed to being a vocal climate leader, and to overcome these significant cost challenges and meet our sustainability and net zero goals we must lobby the Government for more funding. The Government has promised a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over 10 years from 2020/21; however, it is estimated that it will cost £104bn to retrofit all social housing in the UK to zero carbon standards, and there is presently no answer to where the shortfall will come from.

At the time of writing this strategy, Barnet Homes has bid for £4.5m in grant funding from the SHDF, which will be match-funded from the Housing Revenue Account. Sustainability-related technology is moving at a rapid rate, so we will prioritise a 'fabric first' approach to achieve our net zero goals, such as looking at the internal and external insulation of our homes. Barnet Homes is taking the opportunity to optimise energy-efficiency works during other works on the council's stock, and this two-year programme through to 2024/25 means that overall Barnet will commit £6m to retrofitting our homes and increasing energy efficiency.

Whilst our focus is on fabric first, we will continue to explore the role of green technologies in the management of our housing stock. Barnet Homes is installing environmental sensors in homes that are subject to sustainability works and those which have damp and mould related issues, in order to measure temperature and humidity at all times of day and monitor these remotely. Environmental sensors can help to overcome many challenges, from compliance and carbon footprint to mould risk and fuel poverty. This increases resident safety, whilst providing Barnet Homes with greater insight that it can use proactively to deliver improvements and help meet our aim to ensure healthy homes, and potentially pre-empt moderate or severe cases of damp and mould and condensation. Barnet Homes will take forward technology pilots which are likely to include solar panels and photovoltaics, and heat pumps, and will also explore other technology options to allow property issues to be addressed proactively rather than reactively, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions.

Barnet Homes will continue to implement interim support to help improve sustainability, improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency, and reduce the impact of the cost-of-living crisis for our tenants, such as the initiative being taken forward in partnership in 2021 to provide energy-saving boxes containing radiator reflective foil sheets, draught-proofing strips, and low energy LED lamps.

It will also determine a plan for replacing gas boilers in our existing council housing homes with alternative heating systems, such as heat pumps.

We will ensure Barnet applies for all possible funding streams to help retrofit its social housing stock, including using levers such as the Mayor of London's £10bn Innovation Partnership, and working with his national retrofit centre of excellence to develop successful plans to secure funding in future rounds of the SHDF.

DRAFT

Priority 4: Raise quality and standards in the private rented sector.

The private rented sector is home to a high proportion of Barnet’s residents, and affordability constraints mean that for many it is a way of life. The number of households relying on the private rented sector has more than doubled in the last 20 years, and now accounts for a third of the homes in the borough.

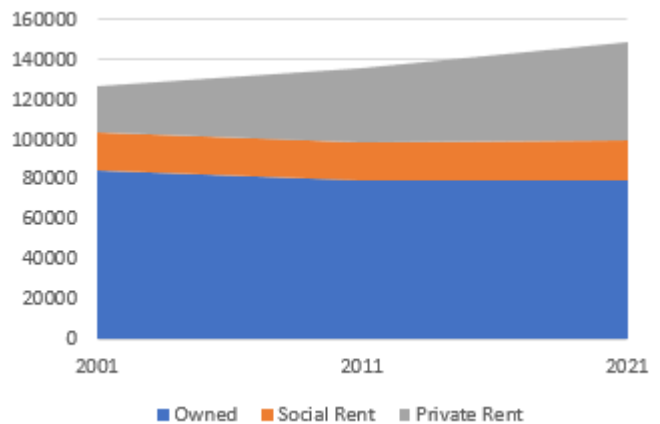
We want to see a stable private rented sector in Barnet with good standards of management and quality, affordable homes for the many residents who live in these homes.

Many residents who rent privately are happy with their homes and many landlords in Barnet offer renters a good service and a quality, safe, well-maintained home; however, a minority let their tenants down with poor property conditions, sub-standard services, and in some cases criminal behaviour, which pose a risk to tenants’ health, safety, and wellbeing.

We already work with landlords to help raise standards, and we use our powers and enforcement action to tackle rogue landlords and communicate to landlords and reassure tenants that poor standards will be addressed.

From April 2020 to February 2023, we have dealt with 1,153 complaints about disrepair in the private rented sector. Licensing is in place for 973 private rented homes across the borough, with 69% of mandatory licensed houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) meeting major conditions as of February 2023. From April 2020 to February 2023, 482 Category 1 hazards have been reduced to Category 2 hazards.

We recognise that private landlords are facing significant challenges, including rising mortgage rates, many lower-income tenants finding it hard to pay their rent because of reforms to the welfare system, and growing financial and regulatory requirements. Raising standards in the private rented sector and ensuring homes are safe and secure are key priorities for the council, and we will continue to build our relationships with private landlords and provide advice and support where possible to help them improve standards and meet requirements.



Our ambitions

We will empower and support private renters to hold their landlords to the required standards by introducing a new private tenants' rights charter.

We will use our powers to continue to advise and wherever possible support private landlords to achieve the required standards, and we will take enforcement action where needed.

We will make effective use of property licensing across the borough, seeking to extend it where it is identified to be the most appropriate way to improve living conditions for private tenants.

How we will deliver

Introducing a new private tenants' rights charter

All tenants should have access to a good quality, safe, and well-managed home. We want to help empower private renters by ensuring more are aware of their rights. We will introduce a private tenants' rights charter to ensure private tenants are aware of their rights as well as the council's powers to intervene where we can.

Strengthening our approach to property licensing

We have introduced a borough-wide House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing scheme to ensure oversight of housing conditions in the private rented sector, as well as an additional licensing scheme for HMOs that are occupied by three or more persons or two or more households. In 2023 we introduced a selective licensing scheme across Burnt Oak, Colindale North, and Colindale South wards to cover the entire private rented sector in these areas.

Our intention is to use a data-based approach to evidence other areas within the borough where there are poor property conditions and selective licensing may be the most appropriate course of action to improve living conditions for tenants, and complete a consultation exercise in line with the relevant legal requirements.

Our aim is to investigate opportunities to develop and improve upon the current use of robust data to increase our knowledge on the energy efficiency rating of dwellings in the borough to support the approach to net zero, and ensure enforcement activities to reduce the number of category 1 hazards are undertaken in a manner that makes the best use of the resources available.

We will proactively monitor standards in licensed accommodation and accommodation that should be licensed and take enforcement action where necessary. Where appropriate, we will work with the police to address criminal behaviour by landlords, and we will publicise successful prosecutions.

Ensuring we have the right resources in place to support tenants and landlords in the private rented sector

We are in a period of significant change in the housing and related sectors, and it is essential that we remain flexible as new requirements are introduced over the coming years. In particular, we will be responsive to improve energy efficiency in the private rented sector and to emerging requirements associated with the potential extension of the Decent Homes Standard to private properties. We will do all that we can to support landlords to achieve the required standards, and we will put in place monitoring and enforcement where it is needed.

Too many households are living in properties blighted by damp and mould. We work closely with private landlords through our licensing schemes to improve the condition of private rented homes, including where there are issues with damp and mould. We will continue to strengthen the information we provide, and increase our engagement and work with private landlords and tenants to tackle this issue. We will continue to provide training for our Environmental Health Officers to ensure they are skilled and knowledgeable, and we will take part in London-wide initiatives to make sure we take a best practice and consistent approach with other London boroughs. Our Regulatory Services will continue to work closely with Barnet Homes' Housing Options service, and will pilot the use of a dedicated Housing Enforcement Officer to work between the services to strengthen the approach to maintaining private tenants in their homes where there is a risk of them becoming homeless due to poor housing conditions.

We also know that many private landlords face significant challenges in meeting the national and local net zero targets, and we will build our understanding of barriers that may exist to the challenges of meeting the borough's sustainability objectives as well as achieving Decent Homes. Our approach to ensuring private landlords are compliant with Central Government's Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) legislation will be pragmatic to these challenges. We will work directly with private landlords to raise their awareness of statutory requirements and what it means for their property, as well as any support or incentives we may offer to deliver the retrofitting needed to help deliver the council's and national sustainability ambitions, prior to taking enforcement action and applying civil penalties against any non-compliant properties below EPC E. We also recognise that Central Government funding is essential to help the sector achieve the sustainability targets, and we will lobby for additional investment wherever possible.

We will keep under review the level of resourcing within the council and the resourcing that is needed to meet our objectives, with a focus on giving advice to landlords and supporting them to ensure homes meet the required standards, supporting and advising private tenants to ensure they understand their rights, and taking enforcement action where it is necessary to ensure legal requirements are met.

We will review how we can work in partnership with Middlesex University and continue to provide professional development opportunities to Environmental Health Officers, such as apprenticeships.

Priority 5: Support living well by promoting healthy homes and wellbeing.

Barnet's population growth in the 2021 Census was higher than that of England and the London average. There was an increase of around 4% in the proportion of people aged 35 and over, and a 4% decrease in younger people and children, which will impact upon the profile of the borough in future years. An ageing population may see an increase in those with limiting long-term illnesses. A good quality, secure, and affordable home is the foundation that everybody needs to lead a healthy life. Good housing can help support general health, wellbeing, and positive life outcomes, as well as our other objectives such as being family-friendly, helping older and vulnerable people to live independently, and supporting educational attainment and wellbeing in children. We want to ensure Barnet's homes and neighbourhoods support people to live long, healthy, happy lives in their own communities. Overcrowding, fire hazards, over-or underheating, very old or broken boilers, excess noise, trip hazards, damp and mould, indoor air pollution, and inadequate lighting can all cause reduced quality of life and risks to health and wellbeing.

We want to ensure resilient and safe communities across the borough, and to empower residents and communities so they can thrive. This includes residents having the ability to bounce back from stress and hardship and to take on new challenges which lead to better outcomes. To ensure our success we must focus on neighbourhood-based approaches to tackle inequalities across the borough, build on our partnerships with public sector and VCS organisations, and promote digital inclusion.

Housing is just one element of the built environment that influences health, and therefore it is important to consider the ways it is connected with other determinants of health. Housing that is well connected to transport links, local amenities, and educational and employment opportunities is more conducive to healthy living.

Whilst there is much we can do within our council housing stock to achieve our net zero targets provided we receive adequate funding from the Government, our overall sustainability goals will only be met by engaging and support households across the borough to reduce carbon emissions. We know that most domestic properties in Barnet have a current energy performance certificate rating of either C or D, and that since 2018 the proportion of domestic properties with an EPC of B, C, or D has increased, and of A, E, F, and G has decreased. Most households (72.8%) rely on gas central heating, and more than 15,000 households are living in fuel poverty. By installing retrofit measures, including loft and wall insulation, double glazing, and floor insulation, 75% of homes have the potential to reach EPC Band C or above.

We will deliver this priority of our Housing Strategy by working effectively in partnership, including with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), and delivering council strategies and plans including those related to the cost of living, Community Safety, Community Participation, Sustainability, and Adult Social Care.

Our ambitions

We will work towards healthy homes across the borough by tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency, risk due to damp and mould, and water efficiency.

We will work in partnership to drive up standards of living and improve housing-related outcomes for Barnet's residents.

We will care for our places and our people, and help create vibrant, cohesive, viable communities.

We will use our voice to advocate for residents locally and nationally on housing-related issues.

Prioritising healthy homes across Barnet

We are committed to working towards healthy homes across Barnet, to support residents through the cost of living crisis, help the borough achieve our sustainability goals, and ensure good housing supports improved wellbeing.

Our Sustainability Strategy will deliver our net zero ambitions, and whilst we have greater control over efforts within the buildings and homes we own, through this we will work together with and support residents, business, and community groups across Barnet to help us become a net zero borough by 2042, including by strengthening access to information, support, and advice on issues such as fuel poverty, energy efficiency, and water efficiency, which is also part of our work to support residents through the cost of living crisis. In our work to assist residents living in the private rented sector and homeowners to make their homes more sustainable, we will prioritise those households most at risk of fuel poverty.

We recognise that many households within the borough may be equity rich but cash poor, and that the estimated minimum cost of £15,000 to retrofit homes will be challenging for many. Wherever possible, we will help residents secure grants to retrofit private homes and will signpost them to advice and support through our BarNET Zero campaign. We will also explore other options for improving awareness and supporting residents, including the potential to develop a tool that allows residents to find energy assessments online for their homes and identify the best measures they can take to improve efficiency.

We know there is a significant skills and knowledge gap in the current market, and we will explore the potential for Barnet Homes to develop a marketable retrofitting service. In doing so, we will aim to build pathways with local universities and colleges to help create opportunities and develop valuable skillsets within the borough.

Damp and mould are issues that can affect any home in the borough, and we are committed to working with residents and our partners to raise awareness and improve standards of living. We will work in partnership across all services including Public Health, Housing, and Regulatory Services, to deliver a joined-up information campaign so that all residents have increased knowledge about the causes of damp and mould and how they can reduce condensation in their homes, as well as how to access further support. We will continue to work closely with housing associations that own homes in Barnet to ensure tackling issues such as damp and mould continue to be a priority.

Across the council and jointly with Public Health and Housing we will work closely to ensure housing is part of the health agenda and address housing issues around crowding, indoor cold and

insulation, indoor heat, home safety and injuries, and accessibility. We will include housing and health items in the Making Every Contact Count commitment to make the most of each opportunity to help people improve their health and wellbeing through information and awareness sharing and signposting. We will also work with NCL integrated care board and primary care to link the council's activities with the NHS, such as funding of home repairs for people discharged from hospital.

Improving standards of living across tenures

Housing-related support services

The council and The Barnet Group have in place a range of housing-related services that go beyond simply providing homes in which people can live to supporting and enabling residents to live well and achieve improved financial, employment, educational, and social outcomes.

Several of The Barnet Group's services also provide support for other residents within the borough. In addition to Barnet Homes' floating support services for tenants of the council, the Barnet Outreach team provides free-of-charge floating support services to other residents within Barnet who have housing-related support needs. Barnet Homes will continue to provide this service to help people maintain their accommodation by offering a range of support that promotes independence and empowerment. It is targeted at those who are may be most vulnerable within the borough, including care leavers, recent victims of crime, survivors of domestic abuse, those suffering or causing anti-social behaviour, people returning from hospital, people with a substance misuse problem, and people with a mental, physical, or learning disability. The help provided includes with claiming benefits and budgeting, practical advice on day-to-day living tasks, support to comply with a tenancy agreement, support with finding reasonably priced furniture, advice on finding training or employment, and support and information about moving.

The Barnet Group's BOOST service operates an outreach model with a focus on meeting the needs of hard-to-reach communities that often don't see the benefits of mainstream information and support services, with little or no access to information, and are at risk of falling through the gaps. We will continue to support BOOST to deliver the vital employment, financial, welfare and housing advice, digital inclusion, cost of living, and training and qualifications support that helps residents to be financially independent, reach their full potential, and contribute to a financially resilient and thriving Barnet.

BOOST co-locates Barnet Homes staff with a number of services including staff from DWP Jobcentre, youth engagement, and mental health coaches. Since 2015, it has delivered a range of outcomes including supporting 1,465 residents into employment. In 2021/2022 the service assisted 387 people in to work, helped 3,300 residents with wellbeing and translation services, and supported 99 young people into employment, education, or training, and provided 300 hours of mentoring support to apprentices. Some of the activities that will be taken forward over the coming years include:

- accessing low-cost laptops and broadband to enable people to get online;
- improving digital skills;
- supporting residents with money management, employability, confidence and motivation, and self-care;
- identifying and referring vulnerable residents who are in need of support;
- helping housing applicants gain and maintain a community contribution to increase their choice and priority under the Housing Allocation Scheme;
- employment support and job brokerage for all, including rough sleepers; and
- providing access to training for work, including green skills.

Barnet Homes and Adult Social Care will work in partnership to map existing practices and pathways including the move-on protocol, with the aim of ensuring effective approaches are in place to provide the right support where it is needed, and to improve practices.

Fire Safety in high-risk high-rise blocks remains a concern for many residents. Working with freeholders, leaseholders, the London Fire Brigade, and the government, the council will continue to target the highest risk blocks and ensure that minimum standards are met.

Supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis

The council will also continue to deliver its cost-of-living support plan, with advice and signposting for all residents including with paying bills, support for children and families, money and debt, housing advice, help with health and wellbeing, and support with jobs, training, and skills.

Supporting people to stay in their homes for longer

With an ageing population, we expect to see an increase in care and support needs within Barnet over the coming years. We want to support residents to stay in their homes for longer, and our housing, social care, and health services will work in partnership to strengthen support services and increase opportunities.

The Government's social care white paper 'People at the Heart of Care', published in December 2021, set out an intention to balance demand for specialised supported housing with adapting mainstream housing to meet needs and enable people to continue to live in it. Adult Social Care will work closely with Barnet Homes to deliver its social care reform plan and the Right Home commissioning plan, ensuring that every decision about care is also a decision about housing, and embedding housing within the health and care system.

We will invest in preventative services wherever possible to enable people to remain in their own homes for longer, whether they are social housing tenants or residents of the council or private registered providers, private renters, or owner occupiers. We will also explore ways to make it easier for all homes to be adapted to enable independent and safe living, including ensuring we make the best use of funding available for delivering aids and adaptations to homes for people who need them.

Our housing services will work closely with Public Health to ensure housing is part of the health agenda, including with the Making Every Contact Count commitment to make the most of each opportunity to help people improve their health and wellbeing.

Caring for our places and people

We do not want to be complacent, and in caring for our places we want to transform what is already good about living in the borough to what is great. To achieve this, we will do more to support residents to feel safe at home and in the community, and we will celebrate the richness of our diverse communities. We know that not everyone's experience is equal. There is more to do to support those with greater or more complex needs to live well, and we need to make sure that those who may not have access to the same opportunities or experience equitable outcomes are not held back.

Good housing is not just about bricks and mortar; to create vibrant, cohesive, and viable communities we must enhance our connected green spaces and assets, and tackle issues such as antisocial behaviour. We must also ensure residents have a voice and are involved in shaping and designing housing-related services. Everyone has the right to feel part of the community in which they live, and with increasing diversity within the borough we will work in partnership with residents and partners in the public and voluntary and community sectors to build strong, cohesive communities.

Our goals and commitments are set out in our Community Participation Strategy and our Community Safety Strategy that aims to ensure sustainable, resilient, and safe communities. Barnet

Homes will also deliver upon these commitments through its Customer Experience Strategy, Community Engagement Strategy, and Successful Tenancies Strategy.

Advocating for residents on housing-related issues

We and local authorities across London and the country are facing unprecedented challenges. Whilst there is much we can do by working in partnership, we must acknowledge that we need more support from central government to tackle the housing crisis and improve people's life chances and outcomes. We will work as part of regional groups as well as individually to advocate for our residents and provide a strong lobbying voice to help inform the Government on the changes that are needed, including regarding housing supply, sustainability and good design, welfare reform, longer tenancies, homelessness, fire and building safety and cladding, and social care and mental health services.

DRAFT

Next steps

This Housing Strategy sets out Barnet Council's vision for everyone to have a safe, secure, affordable home where they can thrive, and our approach to housing over the next five years. It describes what we want to achieve and focuses in particular on the big changes that are necessary for our success.

It will be used to inform our planning policies and guidance, and the development of and support our other housing-related strategies, such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Adult Social Care's Right Home commissioning plan, as well as other council strategies and plans that aim to drive positive outcomes for the people of Barnet and embed our commitment to being a council that cares for people, our places, and the planet. These include the Barnet Plan, the Sustainability Strategy, the Growth Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan, the Adult Social Care Reform Plan, and the Right Home commissioning plan.

It also sets out the issues on which we will campaign and lobby central government and advocate for the rights and needs of our residents where new funding, laws, or powers are needed to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Our commitments under the themes of this Housing Strategy show, in broad terms, how we will implement the strategy. While it describes a number of specific initiatives that are already underway or are planned or have the potential to be explored, it does not offer every detail of how our objectives will be achieved. In some cases, we do not have all the answers, and want to consult further with residents and partners before we finalise our plans and put them into action.

We will develop action plans where needed and will report regularly on progress and how our aims are being put into practice. We will apply for funding wherever possible to help deliver improved outcomes for residents, and where further investment is needed to improve or develop services this will be considered through individual business cases. The actions we will take will need to be flexible and responsive to emerging needs and new housing-related circumstances over the five years of this strategy. Delivery is not just a matter for the council, but will also involve partnership with residents, developers, landlords, service providers, public sector partners, and the voluntary and community sector.

There is also a central role for Barnet Homes, the council's housing management organisation, which will also continue to deliver its own housing-related strategies and improvement plans in support of this Housing Strategy. We will continue to set targets for our services within Barnet Homes' annual Delivery Plan, through which we will be able to monitor the impact of our work and take a flexible approach to dealing with the housing and homelessness crises.

Despite the significant challenges we face to tackle the housing crisis and provide suitable, genuinely affordable accommodation for everyone who needs it, this strategy sets out a positive, proactive approach to how the council, its partners, and residents can work together to achieve our aims. Whilst there is no easy solution to all the challenges we face, and our delivery of this Housing Strategy will not resolve the many causes and impacts of the housing crisis, we are confident it will help improve our position and deliver positive outcomes for many of Barnet's residents.

Housing Strategy context

