

Labour Group Response on the London Borough of Barnet Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

Day 1 Matter 2 Housing

1. The timescales for rebuilding the priority housing estates and for the regeneration and development areas like Cricklewood Brent Cross, and the long delays that have occurred to date, means that thousands of families in Barnet in housing need now will continue in need for the foreseeable future. The decision to regenerate Dollis Valley for example was taken in 2002/3. The first development partner produced a master plan but nothing else. Now, near 10 years later, we are in the process of selecting a new development partner. This lengthy delay in providing much needed housing is surely at variance with creating the **strong safe and prosperous communities** envisaged in **PPS12**
2. In Policy **CS3** we should state that we will allow densities in the upper range of the London Plan in sites with a high PTAL and we will do this notwithstanding any preference in the Three Strands for less development in that area or no development at all.
4. In policy CS4 should retain the 50% affordable housing on sites of 10 or more units and we should not state that we will **seek** a borough wide target. etc. We should **state** that 50% affordable **will** be required. With the acute housing need we have in this borough and the length of time those in housing need have been on the waiting list we have to demonstrate that we are serious about tackling the problem. We should also revert to the 70% social rented and 30% intermediate. The 50% affordable from a threshold of 10 should appear in the text of CS4. What we **should** be trying to achieve in CS4 is a decent home in Barnet for 9,054 families who will never be able to afford to buy a small flat in Barnet for £300K or more, or a small house for at least £400K. **Also the statement at paragraph 9.1.2 is simply not the case.** A recent survey by Shelter found rents in Barnet to be “extremely unaffordable” and “the average private sector rent in Barnet is 56% of average take home pay”.
5. The wording of policy DM08 should state that we determine the size of affordable houses needed on a site by site basis. At paragraph 9.1.6 in policy DM08 it is stated that **“the policy seeks to provide choice for households by building the right homes that are suitable for the next generation”**. That’s all very well but what about the **present** generation? What about the thousands of families on the housing waiting list now? A recent survey, **North London Strategic Housing Market Assessment**, found that there were 9,054 households in Barnet in housing need and who could not hope to buy here. This is not surprising as that same survey established that on average a one bed home in Barnet costs £283k a two bed £287k, a 3 bed £341k, a four bed £462 and these are just average prices they’re far more in some areas. The survey revealed that Barnet has the smallest affordable housing stock of all the boroughs in the North London sub-region. The report also warned that the

Government's plan to reduce housing benefit will have serious consequences for households in housing need in the rented sector.

6. The **preservation** of Barnet as it is and as envisaged in the Three Strands Approach document is the theme that pervades the Core Strategy. This is why policy **DM01** is so prescriptive. It would be wrong to leave a large unoccupied house as it is when, if it becomes available, it could be converted into flats to provide homes for those in need in Barnet. And these conversions need not alter the design or outline of the house. Moreover it is often the case that the owners and residents of these large houses, particularly if elderly, often need to move into a smaller place to avoid the heating bills etc. We see this happening all the time. Paragraphs **g** and **h** should be removed from the policy text.