

Appendix 2: Neighbourhood Moves Scheme Consultation Report

Introduction

- 1.1. The Council is required to consult on changes to its Housing Allocations Policy. Approval was given by Cabinet in September 2020 to undertake a 6-week consultation on the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme, which would lead to a change in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.
- 1.2. The consultation was launched on 28 October 2020, with an email or letter sent to all Council tenants, households on the housing register, and Registered Providers. A total of 15,751 emails were sent inviting the recipient to take part in the on-line survey and 11,045 letters sent to those without a known email address, alerting them to the consultation and providing a link to a webpage with information on the consultation and an online consultation questionnaire. A dedicated email address and phone number were provided to allow consultees to ask questions, and to allow those without access to the internet to request that a paper consultation form and stamped address return envelope be sent to them. The consultation was also publicised in the tenant newsletter and to support agencies via the Bridge Renewal Trust.
- 1.3. Due to coronavirus and the ongoing restrictions in place in London, the Council was unable to hold information sessions in person for consultees. Instead, two online events were held which included both a presentation on the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and a live question and answer session. These events were also available as recorded sessions on the consultation page for those who were unable to attend the live event.

Consultation response

- 1.4. The Council received 589 responses to the survey with 509 completed online and 80 using a paper form received by post. One Housing Association contacted the Council directly about the consultation.
- 1.5. In addition to the survey, the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme dedicated inbox received and responded to emails from 68 different participants. The Neighbourhood Moves Scheme dedicated phone line received 331 messages, with 134 requesting a call back. Officers were successful in contacting and discussing the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme with 112 callers and wrote to 6 whom they were unable to contact after at least 3 call backs but who had provided an address. A further 3 callers received a voice message where they had only provided a phone number. Officers were only unable to contact 13 callers who had only left a partial or incorrect number without an address. Of all callers, 226 requested a paper form either in their message or in their discussions with an officer with forms sent out with a covering letter and stamped addressed envelope to return them.

Responses to individual questions

- 1.6. The questionnaire asked respondents for their views on various aspects of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and were asked to both select their preferred option and for any comments or reasons for their answer.

Question 1: General support for the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme

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- 1.7. There was a keen interest and support for the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and many existing residents responded with explanations relating their current circumstances and how this might be a chance for them to move to more suitable accommodation.
- 1.8. This interest was reflected both in phone conversations and email exchanges as well as the survey responses showing 73% in favour of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and 22% in favour with some small amendments.
- 1.9. Only 5% were against the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme which was consistent among all groups when broken down by age, ethnicity, sex, religion, sexuality.

Are you ...	N ^o	%
In favour of the Scheme	426	73%
In favour of the Scheme with some small amendments	132	22%
Against the Scheme	29	5%
Total	587	100%

- 1.10. From the comments, the most common reason for not supporting the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme or seeking to amend it was that those in temporary accommodation and private sector tenants were excluded. However, similar approval was seen among different tenures with only 7% of those living in temporary accommodation being against the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme.
- 1.11. The Neighbourhood Moves Scheme (as consulted on) was designed to ensure that only those giving up a Council tenancy would be eligible for the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme. This means that every local tenant moving through the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme will release their current home to be let through the usual letting process, save where the home was to be demolished. This means that new homes have the potential to help two households – firstly when a local tenant moves to more suitable accommodation, and secondly to the household on the housing register who can take up the local tenant's previous home.
- 1.12. Residents in temporary accommodation and in the broader private sector understood this when this was explained in phone calls or by email and generally were pleased that the additional 1,000 homes would lead to 1,000 additional new homes for the housing register save for those allocated to households on estate renewal schemes.
- 1.13. Another reason a small number of respondents gave for not supporting the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme was that they themselves did not want to move; but since moves under the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme would be optional this reason can be discounted.
- 1.14. It is therefore recommended that the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme continues to only be applicable to secure tenants who can give up an existing council home.

Comment: Exclusion of housing association tenants

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- 1.15. A second issue around the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme in general was that Housing Association tenants should be included in the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme. Although this proposal was considered as part of the review, it was noted that the inclusion of Housing Association properties would represent a significant change to the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme which was consulted on and could therefore not be implemented at this time.
- 1.16. The inclusion of Housing Association tenants would also create administrative difficulties in ensuring that an equal number of additional lets were generated by a Housing Association tenant moving as currently the Council only receives a proportion of Housing Association voids.
- 1.17. It is therefore proposed that the inclusion on Housing Association tenants will be fully investigated with our partner Housing Associations and will be considered in the forthcoming review of the Housing Allocations Policy expected later in 2021.

Comment: Split households

- 1.18. A third comment, which was raised during the on-line webinar, was whether split households would be eligible. Although such moves would reduce over-crowding, the use of two homes would increase the impact on those on the waiting list. After consideration, it is proposed that split households are not allowed to take advantage of this scheme other than in exceptional circumstances.

Question 2: What size scheme should the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme apply to

- 1.19. While not raised in phone conversations or in email exchanges, there was strong support for the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme being applied to all new homes with 76% supporting this option, and only 10% approving the proposal of applying it to schemes of 5 or more new homes.

Q2: Do you think the Scheme should apply to ...	N°	%
All new council homes	444	76%
Only where there are 5 or more council homes being built	56	10%
Only where there are 10 or more council homes being built	18	3%
Only where there are 25 or more council homes being built	36	6%
The Scheme should not apply to any new homes	33	6%
Total	587	100%

- 1.20. The Neighbourhood Moves Scheme (as consulted on) limited its application to sites of 5 or more new Council rented homes to avoid unrealistic expectations being raised on schemes delivering a very small number of Council rented homes. There could also be occasions where individual homes are designed to meet specific need.
- 1.21. In light of the support for all schemes being included, the Council has reviewed this aspect of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and how it might be applied to smaller schemes where, for example, there might be 400 nearby tenants who would be competing for only one additional let.

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- 1.22. The analysis undertaken has suggested that the proposed limit can be lowered but that applications to very small schemes would unnecessarily raise expectations, possibly without any lets being released to tenants on the same estate or within 250 metres.
- 1.23. It is therefore recommended that the application to schemes of 5 or more Council rented homes is amended so that only schemes delivering 4 or more new Council rented homes are included.

Question 3: The Overall Priority Order

- 1.24. There was strong support for the priority order with 70% in favour of the general approach. Those who were against the proposed order cited the preference for other tenures to be included (as discussed above) and that homes should only be offered to those who need them, especially those with medical needs.

Q3: Do you agree with the Priority Order	N^o	%
Yes	408	70%
No	179	30%
Total	587	100%

Comment: Homes should only be offered those who need them

- 1.25. Although there was strong support for new homes being offered to those whose homes are to be demolished and to under-occupiers and over-crowded families, there were many comments that expressed the view that housing should also be offered to those who need it.
- 1.26. The Neighbourhood Moves Scheme (as consulted on) awards existing tenants within Groups 2 and 3 to those who are under-occupying and then over-crowded, and then to other tenants with a housing need. However, the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme also extends the offer to those have no housing need so are unable to join the housing register.
- 1.27. As this final group also release an additional property which can be used to house those on the housing register, and as many have reasons for wanting a move which are not captured by a Housing Needs assessment, it is recommended that these households remain able to access new homes through the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme.
- 1.28. However, Priority Groupings (as consulted on) would give tenants on the same estate but with no housing need priority over tenants with acute housing need in the 250-metre catchment area. It is therefore recommended that Priority Groups 2 & 3 are merged to ensure that anyone with a housing need in the local area has priority over those with no assessed housing need.

Comment: Priority should also be given to those with other housing needs, such as health needs

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- 1.29. The Neighbourhood Moves Scheme (as consulted on) did not offer explicit priority to those who are not under-occupying or over-crowded, and those with other housing needs will be given priority under the third sub-group: existing tenants on the housing register. However, the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme would reserve any homes suitable for those with mobility issues to applicants who have a need for these homes. This means that anyone requiring new homes due to mobility issues will have priority for suitable properties.
- 1.30. It is proposed though that the wording is strengthened to ensure that these homes are only allocated to those who need them.

Question 4: Priority order for those whose home needs to be demolished

- 1.31. There was strong support for priority being given to those whose homes needed to be demolished to provide further new homes which was supported in the comments and in phone conversations. This support also extended to giving these tenants priority even outside the local area with 49% supporting this option, but there was also support for the new homes being offered to those in the local area.

Q4: Should first priority for new homes be given to people whose homes are being demolished ...	N°	%
In the same ward	166	28%
In the same or neighbouring ward	131	22%
Anywhere in the borough	290	49%
Total	587	100%

- 1.32. In the light of this outcome, the Council reviewed this aspect of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme and the conflicting objective of expanding the options for these tenants and the aim of keeping communities together.
- 1.33. Having considered this conflict, the Council proposes that the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme continues to be applied to secure tenants whose homes will be demolished currently living in the same or neighbouring ward to the newly built homes, which will help meet both of these ambitions.

Question 5: Priority for those on the same estate

- 1.34. While there was support for those on the same estate being given priority with 60% agreeing, there was also considerable support for this not being given.

Q5: Do you agree that secure tenants living on the same estate should have priority	N°	%
Yes	357	61%
No	230	39%
Total	587	100%

- 1.35. Comments from those who supported the proposal were often focused on over-crowded households in existing Council housing rather than specifically on the same

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estate and those who disagreed often cited that other tenures should also be included or that using a distance was more appropriate.

- 1.36. Given the reason for supporting the proposals were not centred on the same estate being given priority and that others supported the distance only, it is proposed that those on the same estate and those within 250 metres are given the same priority and combined into one group.

Question 6: Appropriate distance from new housing

- 1.37. There was strong support for the proposed distance of 250 metres with 59% supporting this option while a reasonable number (34%) believing the distance was too small. Only 7% thought 250m was too large.
- 1.38. Comments from those supporting 250 metres often cited that this was a sensible distance and recognised that they should be offered to those nearby and that tenants living further away would not be affected by the building works. Those who sought a larger area often commented that the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme should be open to all, regardless of tenure as mentioned previously, or that everyone with a housing need should be accommodated.

Q6: Is the distance of 250 metres:	N°	%
Too small	201	34%
About right	344	59%
Too large	42	7%
Total	587	100%

- 1.39. Given the support for the distance of 250 metres, it is proposed that no changes are made to the catchment area.

Question 7: Priority for under-occupiers

- 1.40. There was strong support for priority being given to under-occupiers with 86% supporting the proposal. Those against the proposal frequently stated that these households were already suitably housed.

Q7: Do you agree with priority being given to under-occupiers with preference to those giving up more bedrooms?	N°	%
Yes	502	86%
No	85	14%
Total	587	100%

- 1.41. Given the strong support for the priority, and due to the shortage of family size homes, it is proposed that under-occupiers retain priority. However, given the attractiveness of new homes, it is proposed that under-occupiers will only be able to retain one spare bedroom when moving under the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme.

Question 8: Priority for over-crowded households

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1.42. There was also strong support for priority being given to over-crowded households with 90% supporting the proposal. This was the most common reason given by existing Council tenants who wanted to move. No changes are proposed.

Q8: Do you agree with priority being given to under occupiers with preference to those giving up more bedrooms?	N°	%
Yes	528	90%
No	59	10%
Total	587	100%

Question 9: Eligibility Criteria

1.43. There was also strong support for the proposed eligibility criteria.

Q9: Do you agree with these criteria	N°	%
Yes	493	84%
No	94	16%
Total	587	100%

1.44. Frequent reasons for disagreeing with the criteria include rent arrears, particularly those caused by delays in benefits, and that the requirement to have live nearby for 12 months should be increased.

1.45. As the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme already makes provision for discounting arrears caused by delays in the payment of Housing Benefit, no changes are proposed to the criteria.

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Demographics of respondents

Age range	N°	%
Under 20	1	0.2%
21-24	15	3%
25-29	46	8%
30-44	258	44%
45-59	176	30%
60-64	42	7%
65-74	27	5%
75-84	9	1%
85-89	2	0.3%
90 and over	1	0.2%
(blank)	10	2%
Total	587	100%

Disability	N°	%
No disability	338	58%
Blindness or partial loss of sight	10	2%
Learning disability	16	3%
Physical disability	64	11%
Mental ill health	65	11%
Long term illness or condition	119	21%
Developmental disorder	5	1%
Deafness or partial loss of hearing	17	3%
Total	587	100%

Ethnicity	N°	%
Asian	42	7%
Black	300	51%
Mixed	80	14%
White	203	35%
Other	22	4%
Total	587	100%

Sex	N°	%
Female	372	63%
Male	177	30%
(blank)	38	6%
Total	587	100%

Gender	N°	%
Same as birth sex	466	81%
Prefer not to say	23	4%
Differs from sex	8	1%
(blank)	90	16%
Total	587	100%

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Sexuality	N°	%
Bisexual	5	1%
Gay	5	1%
Heterosexual	412	71%
Lesbian	3	1%
Prefer not to say	86	15%
(blank)	76	13%
Total	587	100%

Refugee or Asylum Seeker	N°	%
A refugee	26	4%
An asylum seeker	10	2%
(blank)	551	95%
Total	587	100%

Religion	N°	%
Buddhist	4	1%
Christian	291	49%
Hindu	4	1%
Muslim	146	25%
Sikh	1	0%
No religion	85	15%
(blank)	55	10%
Total	587	100%

Language	N°	%
Albanian	2	0%
English	427	74%
Polish	7	1%
Somali	16	3%
Spanish	17	3%
Turkish	44	8%
Other	33	6%
(blank)	41	7%
Total	587	100%

Tenure	N°	%
Housing Association	20	3%
Council tenant	234	40%
Living in sheltered or supported housing	15	3%
Living in temporary accommodation	160	27%
Other	158	27%
Total	587	100%