

Housing theme: Evidence Sources and Options

Objective: Identifying potential longer term systemic solutions for people in different tenures and circumstances.

Definition of poverty :

1. Households are considered to be in poverty if their income is 60 per cent below the median equivalised income after housing costs for that year (Trust for London definition).

Key lines of enquiry

1. Defining the problem- Definition of Housing Poverty (Housing cost induced poverty)
2. Who is impacted (key groups /types of tenure)?
3. Gathering the lived experience examples of the impact of the COL crisis on housing costs and the actions that people have taken to mitigate this impact.
4. Reviewing Private Rented Sector affordability and supply in Wandsworth.
5. Reviewing the social housing market in Wandsworth.
6. Reviewing the situation with Wandsworth Council Leaseholders (COL impacts).
7. Considering the impact of the changes in the mortgage market (Wandsworth owners with a mortgage)
8. Reviewing the impact of COL crisis on homelessness in Wandsworth.
9. Looking at the impact of overcrowding /under occupation issues.
10. To develop a range of community-based solutions focusing on the national, regional, and local aspects

Wandsworth Housing market

- All wards in Wandsworth have PRS above the national average (20.3%) with total PRS across Wandsworth is around 36%. There are around 3500 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across Wandsworth (3 or more people /2 or more households) .
- Private rental for a one bed dwelling as a percentage of gross pay for Wandsworth is 6th Highest in London and 6.6% above the London median.
- 33, 915 Households owning with a mortgage in 2021, with the prices for Wandsworth higher than the London median for all housing types.
- 25% of dwellings have been bought with a mortgage and that 18% of dwellings are owned outright (London 21%).
- 26,544 households renting from the local authority/housing associations, this figure has remained steady over the last 8 years.
- 19% of dwellings are social rented (compared to 23 % across London).
- Wandsworth Council is the largest social housing provider and the largest private registered providers in Wandsworth are Optivo, Peabody Trust, London & Quadrant Housing Trust, and Wandle Housing Association.

Causes

- Impact of pandemic on the PRS .
- Delivery of affordable housing stock longer term .
- Cost and availability of finance (mortgage /loans etc) .
- Mismatch of supply and demand in the area /region .

Impact

Homelessness /overcrowding /debt /health and wellbeing/poor diet.

Evidence sources

GLA London Housing Market report May 2023 (copy available)

GLA/Savills : London's Affordable Housing funding requirement

GLA Housing in London 2022

London Councils : Delivering new housing supply June 2022

APPG : Enough to be able to live , not just survive (Housing P 5)

Centre for London : Licence to Let : How property licensing could better protect private renters .

The role of rent control in Barcelona's housing policy (Ajuntament de Barcelona)

Assessing the evidence on Rent Control from an International Perspective LSE London

Local Housing and benefits statistics

Local evidence of need /impact (CA housing requests + VCS advocates)

Foundational Economy Research Ltd : The challenge of rebuilding household liveability

RBK&C: Low energy council house

City of York : Zero Carbon Homes Programme

Interim Report: Long term recommendations

1. Support for residents
 - a. Consider how the Council could provide more support to clients who are not likely to obtain social housing due to long waiting times with other housing options such as mutual exchange and mobility schemes.
2. Homelessness support
 - a. Consider how the Council could provide homelessness support to people who are experiencing severe hardship from exploitative landlords
 - b. Commit to only placing homeless residents in temporary accommodation that is equipped with essential items (bed, fridge, cooker etc.) where needed.
3. Low Cost Housing
 - a. Consider and review options for low-cost housing solutions and availability of social housing and the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funding.
4. Exploring targeted housing models.
5. Private rented sector cooperation
 - a. Consider how the Council could improve liaison with private sector landlords.

Options from the facilitated session on 18/07/2023

- Look at the delivery elements of the housing manifesto /strategy/How could these be developed?
- Build more Council Housing (Supported by Cabinet Member and Shelter)
- Regulating the short-let market (particularly Air BnB) (collect data on the impact of Wandsworth Housing market)
- Examining different types of right to buy schemes (l.e buying off private sector)
- Look at planning ensuring that S106 delivers real affordable housing
- Lobby housing industry to build bigger spaces units with more bedrooms for families.
- Look at DLO options including work with local suppliers /VCS orgs: Preston model?
- Target support and information options to specific groups (New borough residents /couples , working families) .
- Support older homeowners, using data to target, benefits / financial support etc
- Supporting communities / Civic education / building capacity /bottom up
- Explore auto enrol type options and constraints : Benefits /water companies , broadband

- Explore Lobby positions London wide, improve the dialogue with the GLA to get the regional perspective .
- Develop a better unified voice /lived experience narrative for Wandsworth using the VCS as gatekeeper / mining the community knowledge.
- Take a more holistic approach housing and benefits, health , employment and a good life etc

Other ideas discussed

For the Council (and partners)

- Delivering the Wandsworth manifesto for housing
- Mass council housing building project
- Borrowing to build the assets
- More co-locating of support and information services (CA and housing etc)
- Prioritising social housing as a tenure
- More research to develop options and solutions with Wandsworth partners to support the squeezed middle (cannot afford to rent or buy no benefits)?
- Build or re purpose more affordable housing
- Provide different solutions focused on different demographics (ie young people have very different issues needs to older population) .
- Conversely look at generational housing models as a solution.
- Review Council debt policy to support those impacted most by COL crisis.
- Look at Selective licencing schemes/ rent controls.
- Work with local Housing associations to develop models of support for tenants
- Develop support options for people on low incomes in PRS
- Examine council stock voids and under occupation issues

For Wandsworth Communities

- Council buying back from the community . AKA Right to buy back.
- Explore a Council/ Public version of equity release ?
- Community commissioning with local orgs doing repairs etc (Preston model)
- Provide evidence base of impact of Universal credit taper
- Explore ways of getting the VCS involved in housing repairs services /resources etc .

- Having a community resource to support communities
- Look at behavioural campaigns, persuading people to downsize (Owner occupiers /social renting etc)
- Quantify the impact on H and WB/domestic abuse .

For London (at a regional level)

- Look at planning policies re size of rooms , mix tenure developments
- Use data from National/ London to identify specific issues and trends in relation to supply and demand ?
- More joined up working between the Mayor of London , local councils, and the housing sector delivering shared priorities , addressing need

For national government

- Lobby on LHA which has been frozen since 2020 and the benefit cap
- Lobby for funding social housing programme (i.e. for a £300 m loan : focus on sharpest end)
- Lobby for a review of tax on property wealth .
- Look at structural issues and barriers in Whitehall
- Allow councils to buy land more easily.
- Carry out research to inform lobby position on discretionary housing payment ?
- about a significant re-alignment of the market
- Lobby through FCA /CMA for state intervention of mortgage market in London and SE England

Other Options

1. Targeted support for different tenures with a focus on need .
2. Look at regulation of the Private rented sector market.(New Bill /Rent cap models) .
3. Look at social housing cost and provision(inc the rules of right to buy scheme) .
4. Support for owner occupiers with mortgages .
5. Look at strategies to increase affordable housing provision in the borough.
6. Examine approaches to Building differently /reusing existing buildings (Modular building/ microhomes / Building on existing rooftops (Skyward).
7. Examine European model for housing provision (tenancies / local control /density)
8. Tenant loans system to tackle arrears /government grants.
9. .Examine the impact of the current system of property taxes and availability of finance /mortgages.