

Review of social landlords in the borough

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Overview

- National context
- Relationships at a local level
- Housing Associations in Islington as landlords and developers
- How we work with and influence HAs in Islington
- What we could do to improve this?

Housing Associations Nationally

Housing Associations are regulated by Homes England to:

- Protect social housing assets and ensure HAs are financial and organisationally viable
- Support the supply of social housing and maintain confidence of investors
- Protecting tenants [weak area of regulation] and ensuring value for money

Some de-regulation of the sector – as part of moving borrowing outside of the public sector borrowing – concerns have been expressed about the reduction in control

HAs overseen by the Housing Ombudsman, as are local authority landlords

Many mergers in the sector in recent years, encouraged by the government, who want to see a strong developing sector and think there are too many organisations.



The relationship between Housing Associations and Local Authorities

- Most HAs are national and work across regions, therefore it can be challenging them to maintain relationships with all local authorities
- HAs naturally concentrate on relationships where they have larger amounts of stock
- Interactions around planning and development, housing nominations and registers, housing management (where located on the same estate), housing standards (where this is a problem), social care (especially where they are support providers too), wider issues such as community safety, safeguarding, waste management etc.

Housing Associations in Islington

As landlords

- We currently have 32 housing associations operating in Islington
- They own and manage just over 16,500 properties.
- They range from large national organisations like Hyde (50,000 homes), Peabody [now including Family Mosaic] (55,000 homes), Clarion (125,000 homes) to small local organisations Islington and Shoreditch [ISHA] (2,200 homes) and Barnsbury (225 homes).

Housing Associations in Islington

As Housing Developers [1]

- Housing Associations (mainly working with developers) still deliver the majority of new social housing in the borough, delivering an estimated total of 360 properties in the last 3 years (2015/16 – 2017/18).
- S106 sites still deliver the majority of social housing in Islington, so Housing Associations often have little control over the percentage of affordable homes unless it is their own site.
- There are fewer developing Housing Associations in the borough because of mergers and high land values. High prices for S106s and acquisitions have led some RPs to deciding against targeting Islington.

Housing Associations in Islington

As Housing Developers [2]

- Developing HAs commitment to borough priorities can vary greatly (i.e. some are market/sale led, others more committed to genuinely affordable housing, others lay somewhere in between).
- Sites previously disposed of to HAs are developed through the council's new build programme. This has reduced our influence over developing associations.
- There is a greater pressure on housing associations from Government and the GLA to 'sweat' their assets and develop more homes. Coupled with their reliance on private sales may make them financially less robust.

How we work with Housing Associations in Islington

- Islington Housing Group – chaired by the CE of ISHA
- 8 largest and 2 local housing associations in the borough
- Working with the council on wider issues than housing such as safeguarding, waste management, anti-social behaviour.
- Group keen to work more strategically and set clear direction for the next year.
- Housing development sub-group for developing housing associations in Islington
- Council's Enabling Team works with HAs and Planning to resolve issues holding up or preventing development and monitors HA development in the borough.

How we influence Housing Associations in Islington

As Landlords

- Islington Housing Group
 - Housing Scrutiny invitations
 - Council's democratic process
 - Meetings at a senior level
 - Members enquiries and complaints
 - Housing standards enforcement
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How we influence Housing Associations in Islington

As Developers

- Through the planning process
- Active HAs required to sign up to the boroughs Nominations Agreement which sets out how new social homes will be allocated.
- The council has offered receipts from RTB sales to HAs to increase their affordable offer on sites (there has been no take up as yet).
- Organise a forum of developing HAs to share good practice and promote the boroughs development priorities.



How can we improve our work with Housing Associations?

- It can be challenging if they do not want to work closely with us or where development opportunity is limited.
- Our priorities may not align with theirs or with the governments – affordable housing vs. genuinely affordable housing – we lay down our priorities through our planning system
- As landlords there is very light touch regulation around resident experience, the greater emphasis being on financial viability and governance
- The more stock HAs have in the borough the more incentive for them to work closely with us and this is where we invest most.