



Questions from Members of the Public

Full Council – 17 September 2018

1. Question from Mrs Kalavatiben Patel to Councillor Eleanor Southwood, Leaed Member for Housing and Welfare Reform

Why can't Housing Association tenants buy a house through right to buy? I would also like to know why Housing Association tenants can't transfer if they are not happy with their current house? When requesting a transfer my Housing Association have advised of the need to bid but in the local area on the Locata Brent Housing Options website there aren't any houses available so how can people bid for a transfer?

Response:

Most housing association tenants do not have the Right to Buy. This is a statutory right generally only available to Council Tenants. But if you were a secure council tenant and were living in your home when it was transferred from your council to another landlord, like a housing association, then you may have a 'Preserved' Right to Buy.

This only applies if you were living in your home when it was transferred. It can also apply if you then move to another property owned by the new landlord. But it does not apply if you move to a property owned by a different landlord.

The government is considering extending the Right to Buy to Housing Association tenants and is currently carrying out a pilot in the Midlands. Once the pilot scheme has concluded the government will consider the results further and may extend the Right to Buy nationally.

In some circumstances you may have the "Right to Acquire" your Housing Association home however the discounts are much lower than the Right to Buy and are between £9000 and £16000 per property. Your Housing Association landlord will be able to advise you further if you are eligible.

All registered Housing Associations are required to have a policy on allocations, transfers and exchanges. These policies will differ from organisation to organisation because they are independent organisations and in some cases such as in London Borough of Brent a Housing Association may sign up to a locally agreed policy. Eligibility and the likelihood of being able to achieve a transfer are affected by issues such as your level of housing need (whether you are overcrowded for example), your circumstances compared to other people who are

eligible (for example another applicant may be in greater need) and probably most importantly the availability of suitable housing in the area you wish to move to, demand is very high and there is a shortage of suitable affordable accommodation in London for many families.

Another way of moving home is for you to arrange a Mutual Exchange which in simple terms means you simply “swap” your home with another tenant of your existing Landlord or another eligible landlord. You should contact your Housing Association for more information.

2. Question from Mrs Elizabeth Gaynor Lloyd to Cllr Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader of the Council:

In the light of (1) the change in Cabinet member responsibility since the assurance given by Councillor Tatler at the Cabinet meeting in August that the Metropolitan Open Land/ open space at Northwick Park was safe, and (2) her comments to the Harrow Times that all proposals will be made in consultation with residents which is scheduled for the coming months, and (3) the fact that a Transport Viability study was carried out almost a year ago indicating the possibility of an access road through the Ducker pool area or the golf course or the Fairway (all of which would involve a road across Metropolitan Open Land), can the Cabinet Member now vested with responsibility for this project please either confirm that these access road proposals have been abandoned or, if not, please publish a simple indication of the rough alternative routes for the access road to the Northwick Park Regeneration area proposed?

If the open space is safe, can the Cabinet member also confirm that there will be no development on the SINC Grade 1 Northwick park & the Ducker Pool B103 area and open space protected under CP18, and that these areas will be fully protected so that their value is not prejudiced by the adjoining/nearby development?

Response:

Peter Brett Associates (transport and infrastructure consultants) have been engaged by the four landowners under the One Public Estate Initiative to work alongside other consultants, to assess the transportation issues that affect the Northwick Park site and its surroundings.

Part of this study included access to the site. A number of options were considered by Peter Brett, with advantages and disadvantages of each given careful consideration. The format and details of future public consultation has yet to be agreed, but this is likely to include access options for discussion and feedback.

The February 2018 Cabinet paper, updating members of progress at Northwick Park, confirms current proposals consider a possible “land swap” of Metropolitan Open Space, subject to the necessary consents. In broad terms this would involve swapping the area currently occupied by the sports pavilion and car park, with an equivalent area immediately to the south of Northwick Park station.

(Para 4.7 Appendix One of February 2018 cabinet report):

“.... include the smaller MOL swap involving the existing pavilion area and the area immediately to the south of Northwick Park station.”

This too would form part of any public consultation.

Mrs Lloyd may be reassured by para 3.2 and 3.3 of the same report, which stated:

3.2 All of the Council freehold ownership, and the Ducker Pond, is designated as Metropolitan Open Land ('MOL'). This effectively affords it the same planning status as Green Belt, where development for uses other than those deemed appropriate for the Green Belt will be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances. The same land area is also designated as local open space.

3.3 The Ducker Pond area is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation Grade I, being of high biodiversity value. This designation extends to part of the Playgolf site, particularly the hedged area at the boundary. Part of the site also forms a section of the Capital Ring public walkway. Policy seeks to preserve and enhance the habitats in these areas.