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POPULATION

Uneven Geography

Census data reveal that Barking and Dagenham is subject to an uneven geography, the mapping of these data showing an uneven distribution across the Borough of key social and economic characteristics. Over time these characteristics have concentrated rather than dispersed. These uneven social and economic geographies are reinforced by concentrations of housing typologies and a spatial regeneration policy that focuses on specific areas for development.

Methodologically it is important to recognise the limitations of census data in providing a picture of a changing and complex locality, but these data allow for a comparative spatial and social analysis as the basis for a more critical inquiry. In focusing on issues and indices of deprivation, and taking a quantitative approach to the study of a local population, this chapter does not aim to pathologise that population, but rather to raise critical questions that any regeneration policy and development proposals should address.

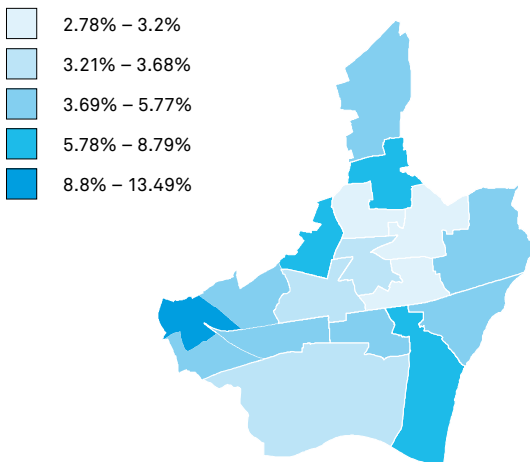
Tenure

Most apparent in the 2001 census data is the clustering of different tenures. Social rent (largely council housing but also housing associations) is most prevalent in the central wards and towards the Town Centre. Whilst the concentration of social housing was comparatively less in 2001 than in 1991, we still find many wards with close to 50% social housing; with a distinct correlation between wards with higher levels of social housing and higher levels of elderly/retired residents.

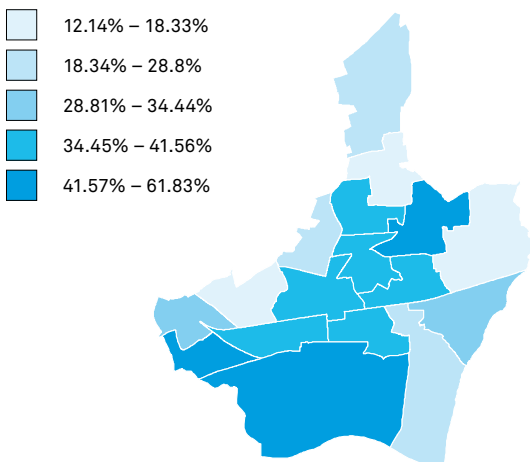
Private rent at its highest density accounts for only 13.49% in the Abbey ward, but concentrations are set to increase with Town Centre regeneration and the related increase in buy-to-let developments.

Statistics show that there is an underutilisation of the housing stock – this refers to the number of people per household rather than vacant property – running in parallel to residents' concerns over the perceived use of social housing for immigrants and asylum seekers.

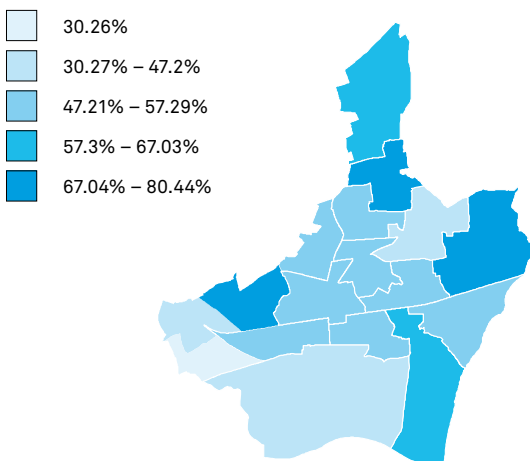
Private Rent



Social Rent



Privately Owned

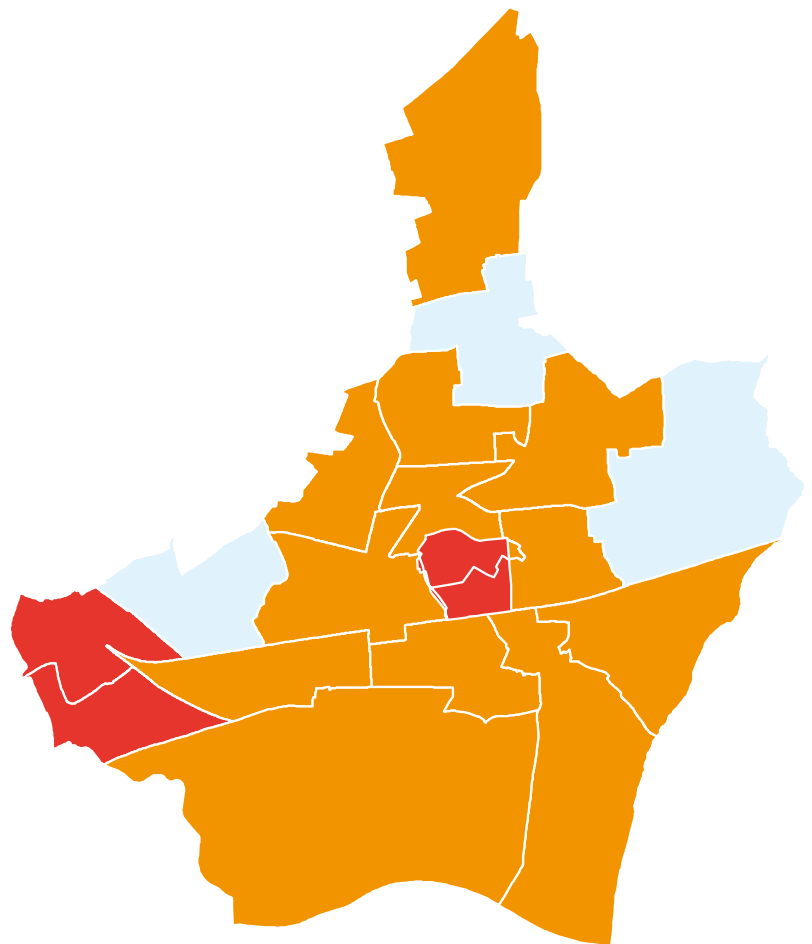


Deprivation in Barking and Dagenham

According to census data the Town Centre and central Barking and Dagenham have three wards which were considered to be within 10% of the most deprived in England: these are Abbey, Gascoigne and Fanshawe (which has since dissolved into Parsloes and Alibon). The majority of wards in Barking and Dagenham are classified within the top 20% of the most deprived wards in England.

Deprivation is a relative and contested term, with multiple definitions, however, the government's official measure of deprivation is through the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD), made up of seven indices and two supplementary indices (income deprivation affecting children and old people).

The seven indices of deprivation concern education, income, employment, health and disability, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime (www.communities.gov.uk). These indices are treated as distinct dimensions which can be diagnosed and measured in isolation, but lead to an overall aggregated result for deprivation for a given area.



2 Map of Deprivation 2001, adapted from Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy map. Fanshawe is the central ward placed on top of the new ward boundaries

Private Rent

- Within 10% of the most deprived wards in England
- Within 20% of the most deprived wards in England

Race and Politics

Between 1991 and 2001 the Borough saw the highest percentage increase in the size of its non-white population of any London borough (Figure 3); whilst the average for Greater London was a 54% increase in the number of ethnic minorities, Barking and Dagenham has seen a 148% increase, growing from a relatively low base (www.london.gov.uk). Described as the ‘most rapid transformation of a community we have ever witnessed’ (Margaret Hodge, MP for Barking) this demographic shift was the platform used by the British National Party (BNP) to gain 12 Council seats in 2005, despite black and minority ethnic population numbers in real terms remaining low across the Borough, with a greater ethnic mix around the Town Centre and in southern Barking and Dagenham (Figure 4).

Politically motivated race tactics amplified the tension and apprehension of established residents, with Barking and Dagenham’s BNP councillors highlighting housing as a key concern for residents (Figure 05). But whilst Margaret Hodge later lamented that the housing shortage in Barking and Dagenham was the result of a lack of long term investment in social housing by both Labour and Conservative governments, for many the issue of housing has now been racialised. Used as a campaign strategy, leaflets were created and distributed marketing the myth of ‘Africans for Essex’, which claimed that the ruling Labour Party was providing ‘Africans’ with £50,000 grants to buy houses in the borough (www.spiked-online.com and www.searchlightmagazine.com).

The issue of race in Barking and Dagenham is highly complex; as in London as a whole, wider globalising forces are adding layers of complexity with the emergence of new types of temporary economic migrants and their families. The speed of these changes has made it difficult for people to fix other people’s identities and can lead to communities becoming suspicious of the ‘other’.

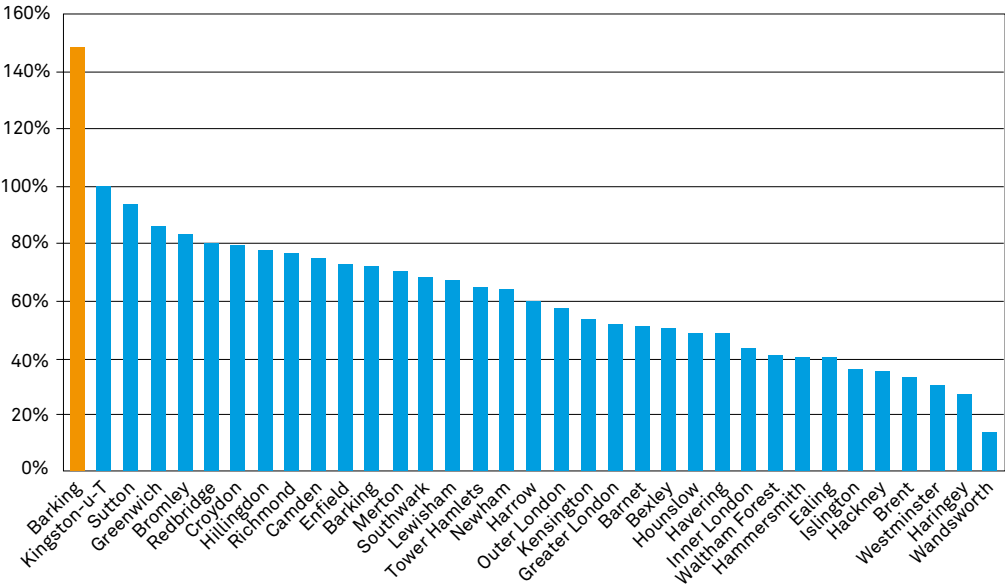
Overview and Comparison to London Profile

Barking Town Centre is similar to the (typical) profile of inner London. Currently the population can be seen as relatively young, well-qualified and ethnically diverse, whereas central Barking and Dagenham is more characteristic of outer London population profiles. It has a high concentration of white residents, in some areas exceeding the national average for England. This predominantly white area correlates with high level of social housing and an older age profile.

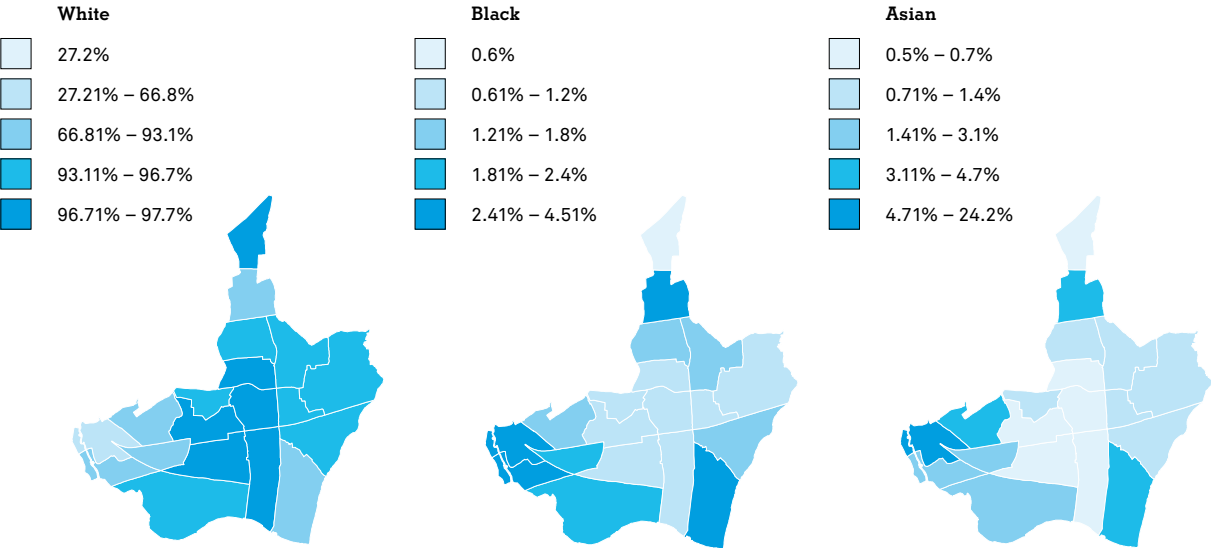
Population Projection and Housing Provision

Twin concerns over in-migration and housing come together in terms of planning for the future population. The GLA (2007) has developed scenario projections from 2006 to 2026. Figure 6 reveals the high scenario: in this scenario Abbey ward’s population could increase by 50-194%, whilst Figure 7 indicates that under the low scenario it could be as little as 10-40%. Can current and future housing provision cope with these projections? Taking Abbey as a case study one needs to ask whether the projected population change correlates directly with the provision of housing. It is evident that, given the high and low scenario there will either be an under supply of housing or an over supply (Figure 8). The range and uncertainty of population projections creates serious potential problems of over or under supply of housing.

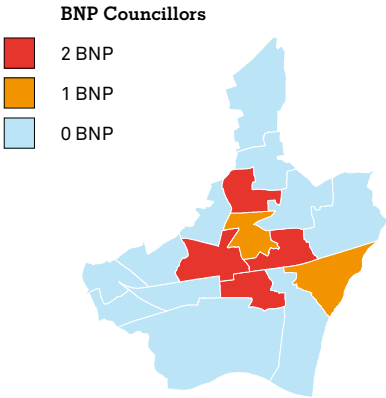
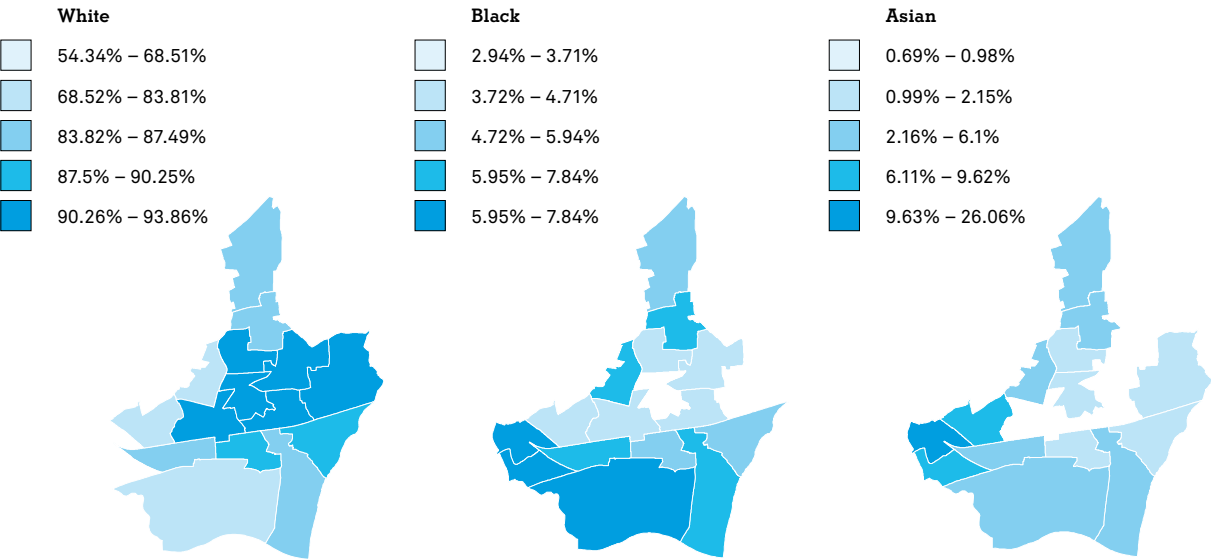
3 Adapted from Greater London Authority bar chart



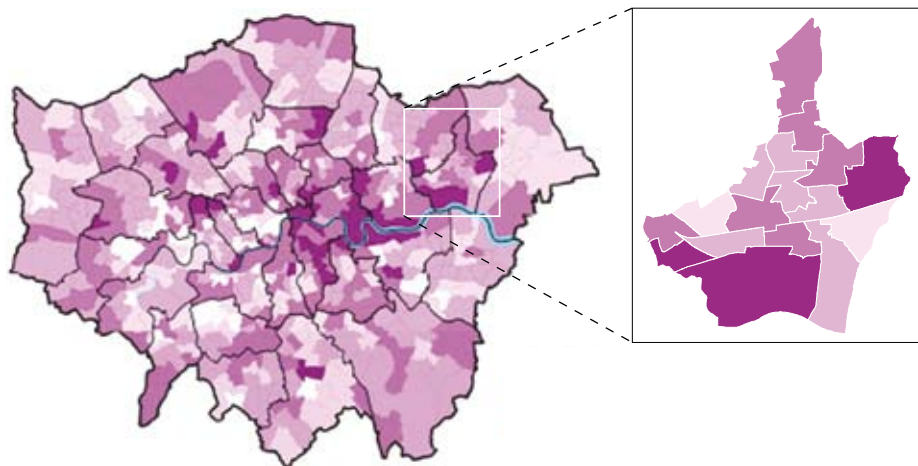
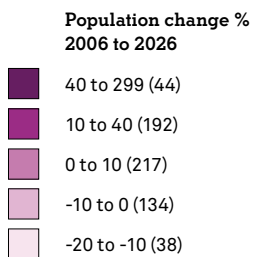
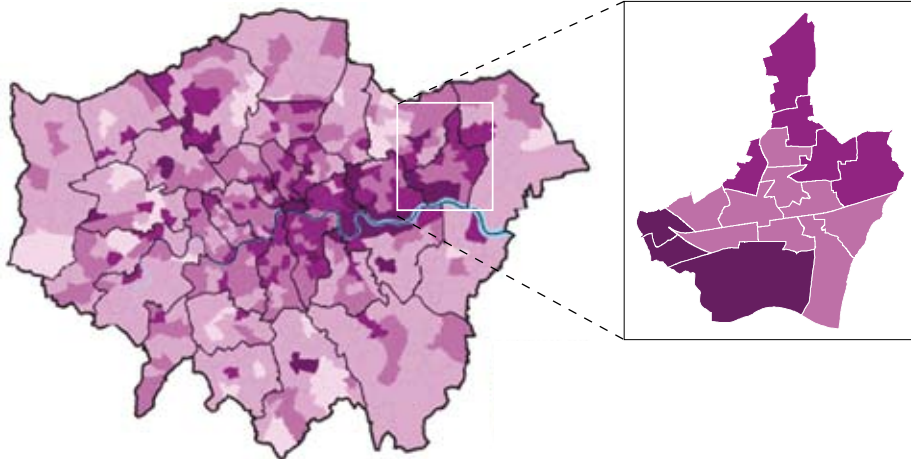
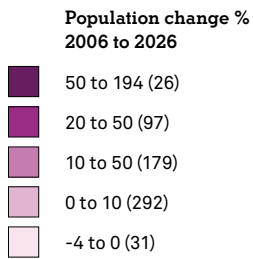
4a Ethnicity from 1991 Census Data



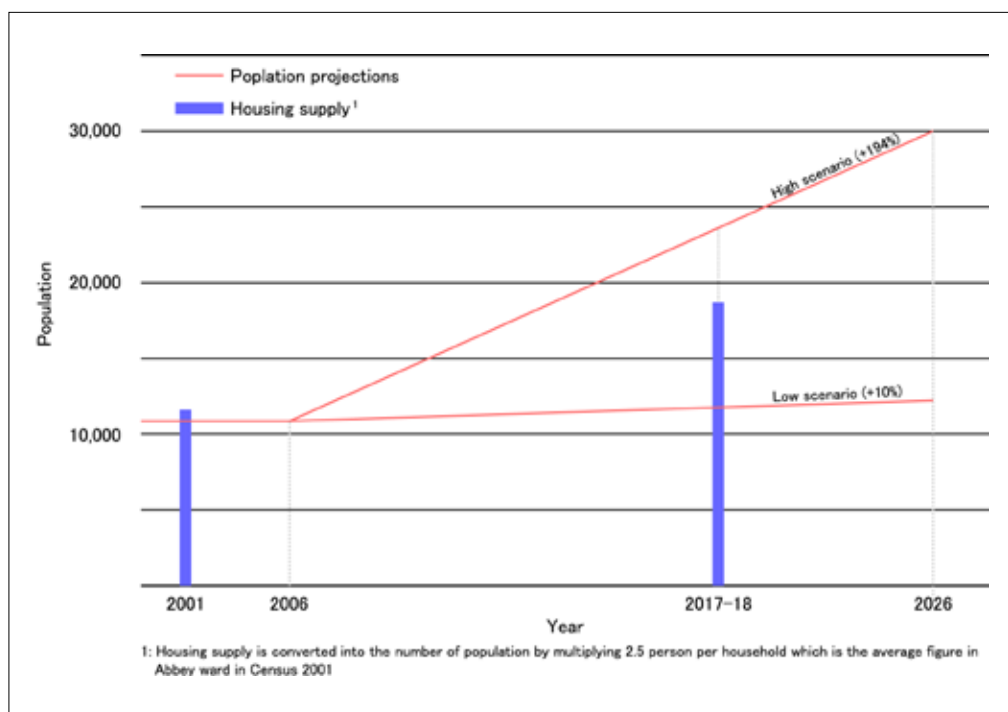
4b Ethnicity from 2001 Census Data



5 BNP councillors – map created from information sourced at www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk



8 Housing Supply in Abbey



Supply is however only half the question, with little idea of the social characteristics of the projected population how is one able to plan effectively for this growth? Is the proposed housing provision suitable for the type of inward migration needed to regenerate the Town Centre as well as other areas in the Borough? Looking at the uneven geography of Barking and Dagenham one also needs to ask if this pattern of regeneration is beneficial to those who really need it. What effect will the Town Centre's regeneration have on the rest of the Borough? The trickle-down effect which is suggested by the position of the current and proposed developments could have negative social implications in an area which is currently experiencing tension.

Regeneration Focus

Figure 9 is a selection of extracts from interviews conducted with residents of Barking and Dagenham. As one can see there is a variety of feelings concerning both safety and race, as well as discontent over the role of the council and perceptions of social housing. How is the current and proposed regeneration going to address these concerns? Figure 10 is a summary of key statistics and regeneration initiatives within the Borough, showing the distribution of both within three key areas. We can see that development is heavily skewed towards the Town Centre and Barking Riverside. It is not clear that the population in central Barking and Dagenham will gain from the improvement of the built fabric that is occurring in other areas – will this trigger deeper social fears which are currently played out in the perceptions of housing shortage. This risks reintroducing a disjointed Borough, with a band of regeneration from the Town Centre down to the Riverside with the rest of the Borough comprising a hinterland; the Town Centre becoming a 'gateway', and central Barking and Dagenham becoming a 'ghetto'.

"My Barking consists of the swimming pool around the corner, this flat and the station...I'm oblivious to anything else around here [laughs]...15 minutes and I'm in Fenchurch Street. It's brilliant."

Matt, a white middle-class city worker originally from Harrogate, who lives in a new development in Barking.

"I have mixed feelings about immigrants. Everyone should have a chance in life. If they get jobs and they're working hard and not harming anyone....Obviously their kids need an education. Nothing wrong with that but when they get preference over people who are born and bred here then that's another matter. Because they're immigrants they shouldn't be getting priority."

"I live on the second floor of a two storey place so how the hell am I supposed to get a buggy up and down the stairs?"

"What is a council property? Is a squat? When I moved in that's what it was like...It's not a decent place to bring your kids up. It took me a long time to fix up my flat."

"They [the council] are quick at taking rent and quick at taking council tax but when it comes to giving, they're not so sharp. That's what makes people so bitter about living in council flats."

Kim, a white lady in her early-30s, she moved to Barking from Kent as a child and now lives in Barking's Abbey Ward with her two children and partner.

"Barking is safe but non-whites feel a bit guarded now I think since the local elections and the BNP have a stronger influence on the local [white] people now. I think immigration has played a big part and fuelled their [local white people's] fury...because the immigrants have come in and taken local jobs, local school places and housing. It's made people who have lived here most of their lives quite angry and resentful to immigrants and also to the Labour Party so they're going to find help with other parties."

"My eldest [child] is going to high school this year, and I'm not happy about...Barking only having two [high schools] to choose from...[because]...most of them are in Dagenham."

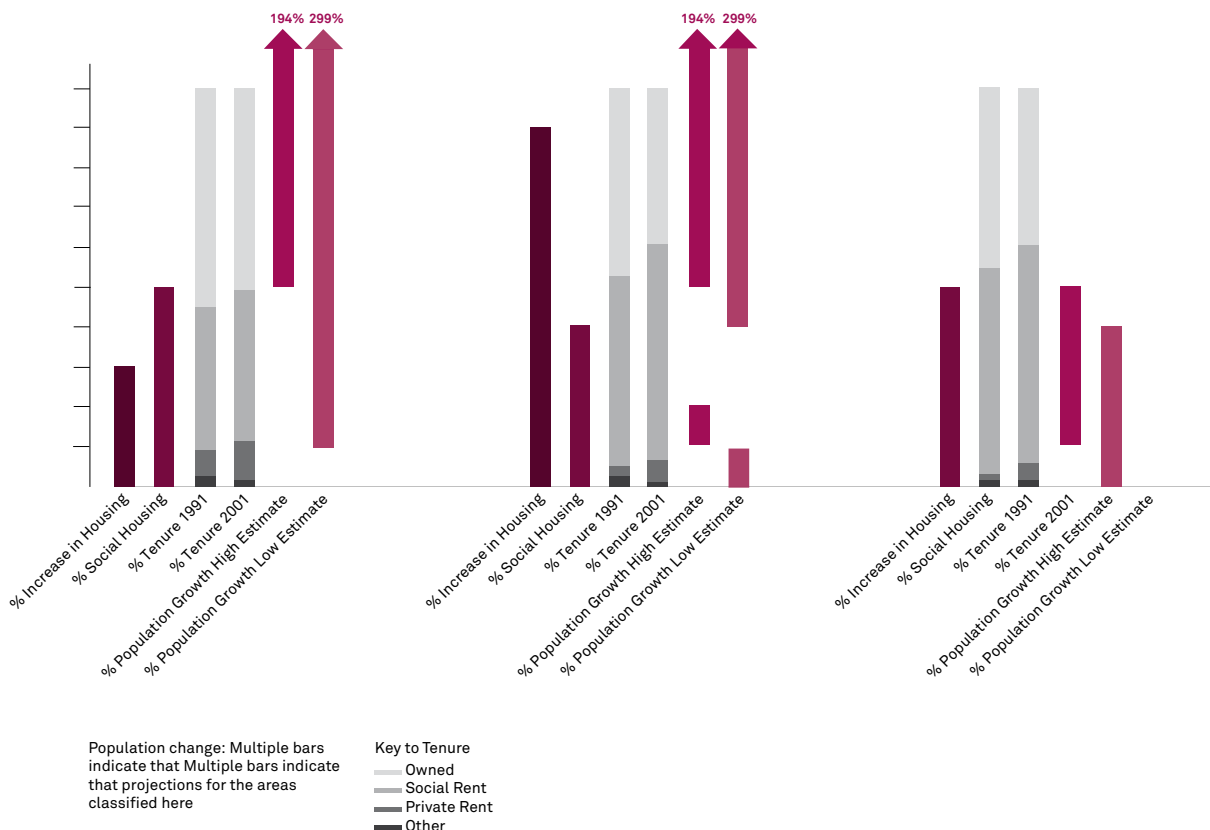
Ayesha, a 31 year old Asian female lifelong Barking resident. She lives in a 2 bedroom maisonette with her husband and 3 children.

"Communities are about working together but it [forming communities] doesn't work because people are scared about giving their opinions."

"I personally think that we should stop all immigration. When it starts to affect you and local people have to take on lower paid jobs then its time to stop immigration".

"When you've got children you want to be safe. I want to be able to feel safe walking outside with my little boy at 7 in the evening. Before that was the case but now it's not. Even if Barking looks like bleedin' Buckingham Palace it wouldn't matter if it's not safe. What's the point in it looking nice and beautiful if it isn't safe?"

Sofia, an Asian 30-something married mother of one, who lives in the Abbey ward and is pregnant with her second child.



Barking Town Centre

1. Tanner Street – Housing
2. Axe Street – Housing
3. The Foyer – Training, social services and residential
4. Town Square – Learning centre, library and residential
5. Fresh Wharf ?– Mixed use
6. The Lintons – Business centre, community facilities and residential
7. Cambridge Road – office and residential
8. Malthouse – creative studio space
9. Barking Business Centre – business development and residential
10. London Road North Street
11. Child and Family Health Centre
12. Variety of Art Projects
13. Urban Landscaping

Total housing units: roughly 2,400, but more are planned

n.b. considered the gateway to Barking
Population change 1981-91: ranges from -3.18% in Gascoigne to +7.07% in Abbey

Barking Riverside

1. Housing
2. Community facilities
3. Two primary schools
4. One secondary school
5. Shopping centre
6. Dagenham dock ?– industrial
7. Dagenham Heathway – public realm, community facilities

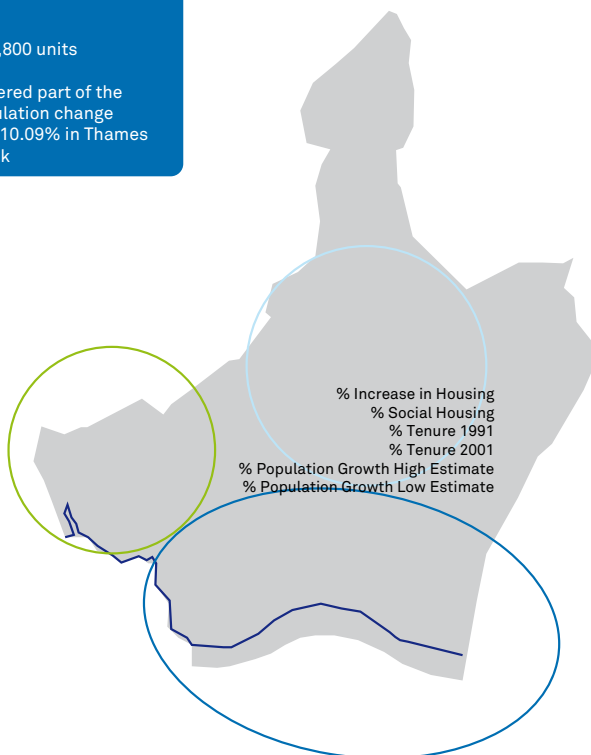
Total housing units: 10,800 units

n.b. this area is considered part of the Thames Gateway. Population change 1981-91: ranges from -10.09% in Thames to -1.91% in Goresbrook

Central Barking and Dagenham

No current developments planned

Population change 1981-91: Ranges from -6.59% in Albion to +0.08% in Fanshawe



Proposition

There are several key issues which the above analysis has highlighted. Firstly, there is an uneven geography in Barking and Dagenham and this may be reinforced by regeneration policy which is focusing almost entirely on the Town Centre and southern Barking and Dagenham. Such economic and cultural development in a 'nodal' form is visible in the physical, infrastructural and economic make-up of different areas.

Whilst in 2002 the London Development Agency (LDA) (www.lda.gov.uk) invested £12 million in Dagenham's 200 acre Centre of Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME) to secure 'a successful and sustainable economic environment in the Dagenham region', residential development in Barking and Dagenham has taken precedence, with some supportive social amenities being built along side housing developments.

Secondly there is a disconnection between areas and people, this disconnection is most evident in the racial politics of the area. Fuelled by a lack of understanding, transparency and restricted life choices for many of those living in central Barking and Dagenham there is friction between the more ethnically diverse Town Centre and central Barking and Dagenham. This has resulted in an environment where race becomes the 'peg' on which discontent is hung upon.

The challenge for government is to develop policies that can not only reconnect a fragmented Borough, and address the physical and social contradictions, but also restore residents' pride in both the Borough and its built environment.

As part of the Mayor's London Plan, high density residential developments close to town centres and transport nodes are encouraged, however in the case of Barking and Dagenham this excludes the relatively deprived populations that live centrally. Therefore policy reform needs to encourage the regeneration of central parts of the Borough in order to make parallel improvements with the Town Centre. This would prevent the decline of the central area and help to make the populations in the central part of the Borough feel that they are included and important in the regeneration efforts of the Borough as a whole.

Proposition Outline

In order to promote cohesion across the board there is a need to have a matrix of policies. With initiatives such as the 'New Deals for Communities', New Labour has moved towards a more integrated approach to regeneration, community involvement and cohesion. With a population that is not only growing but changing in its composition and in a state of flux (as exemplified by local school statistics suggesting a sizeable floating temporary population), policies to encourage community cohesion must be not only integrated but also flexible and adaptable.

Democracy and Design

We propose the development of 'grass roots' design projects that would increase democratic spaces, form physical connections between disconnected communities and help improve the public realm. This would have the triple effect of instilling local pride, promoting local skills and generating quality public spaces for the Borough.

Local design projects could be coordinated with outreach programmes such as Barking Foyer – a mixed use development in the Town Centre that is aiming to provide a stable and secure community for young people aged between 16 and 25 years old. Barking Foyer will provide not only accommodation but also basic training skills, will help individuals to find work and permanent accommodation, as well as offering ongoing support to those that have left (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk). Our proposal is to offer young people enrolled in this programme a chance to gain work experience as well as training on public realm and green space improvements in the Borough. It is also important to involve other at-risk individuals and groups identified as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Such an initiative would localise training, pool resources and give young people access to the labour market.

Working with urban designers, local council, police and other stakeholders can lead to the empowerment of community organisations and the improvement of the public realm, working towards the alleviation of fear and safety concerns by improved social networks and design.

A New Section 106

Whilst Section 106 funding is available to improve those areas that are directly affected by new commercial or residential developments in a given area, a revised Section 106 policy could direct resources to other areas in need of development and support the participation of local groups in 'grass roots' design projects. The aim here is to ensure a smooth transition in the quality and experience of public space between new developments and more deprived areas. This would help to prevent insular design practices in new developments and would make legible connections with the surrounding area and the existing fabric.

How does it work?

Within the framework of 'democratic design' we propose to physically regenerate those everyday public spaces that are contributing to the fragmentation of the Borough. This process should be based on consultation with residents, who are brought in at the beginning to ensure full participation – selecting locations, identifying concerns and proposing solutions. This is about professionals being consulted by the local community rather than communities being consulted with. Policy should provide the framework within which residents access resources and professional support.

An example of such a project proposition can be seen in Figures 11 to 14 in a selected site in Alibon. This location offers a good example of how newer housing developments frequently are not integrated into the existing fabric and how the connections between these areas are jeopardised by both lack of design consideration and Section 106 money.



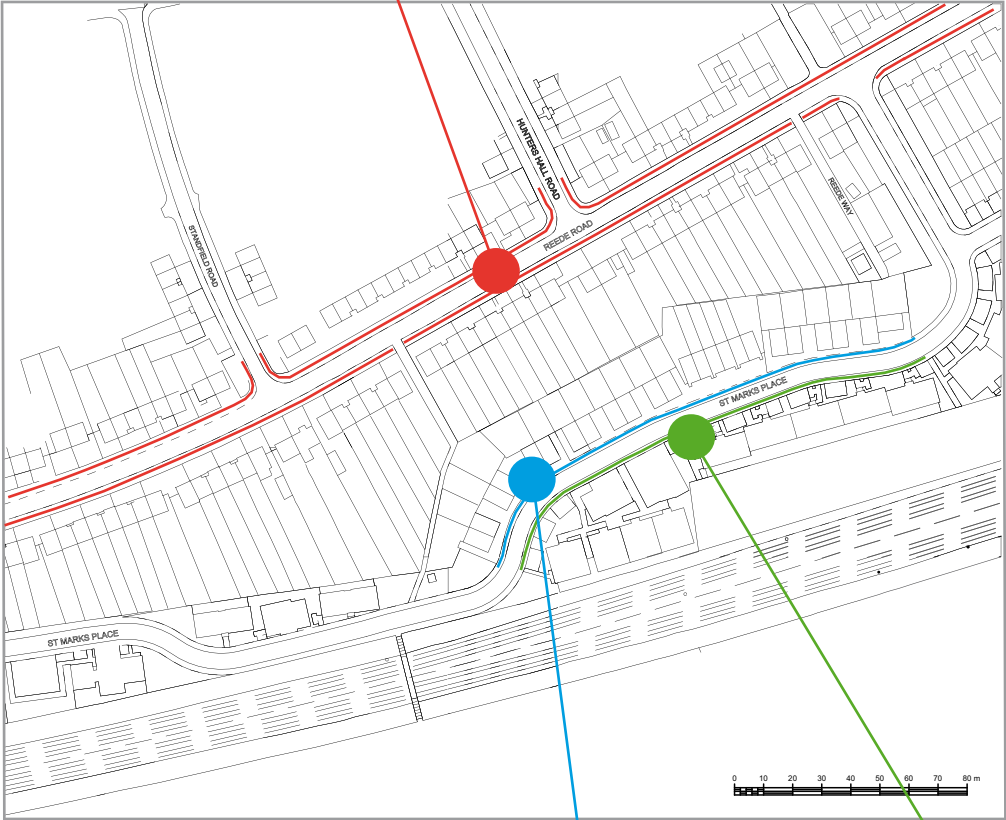
Figure 12 shows the connection between the older terraced housing and this new development. We see an unattractive, unkept alley, and another entrance exclusively for cars. We propose to make this route more accessible, connective, open and user friendly – enhancing the serial vision of the user, the quality of this everyday bit of public realm, and the ‘feel’ of the route in terms of safety. This can be done by using quality materials for both the pavement/road and the walls (Figure 13). Aesthetically, using the classic lighting that can be found elsewhere in the Borough, mixing this with paving that privileges the pedestrian and general greening will instantly make the area more welcoming. Perception of crime is often worse than actual levels; opening up an area like this increases use and changes the image of the area (Figure 14).

Critical Challenges

On a basic level the spatial aspect of this proposal could be viewed as beautification, understood as a superficial improvement that simply makes an area more attractive without addressing any of the deeper social and economic issues. In response to this critique one can ask why is improving an area physically a bad thing? Everyone deserves to live in a quality environment. This is not an uncritical exercise in ‘beautification’, but an understanding of the built environment on the everyday experience of a community.

This proposition however intends to go further than this. It aims to engage the local public in design projects on which they have joint consultation. It also aims to help people develop a range of skills – working with youth groups that have little or no formal training, giving them experience and qualifications.





11 Example location for intervention

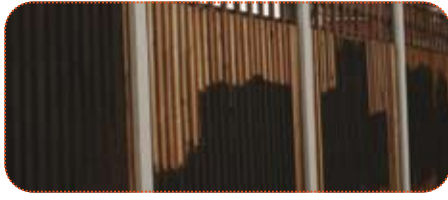


A



B





Participation and Empowerment

There has been a pronounced rise in the use of participation as a tool for increasing sustainability as well as empowerment. But it can be highly problematic. Involvement in regeneration by different groups can often be tokenistic, where they are brought in to a process too late to have any real involvement. There is also the danger that the people most likely to be involved in the consultation process are those with more personal resources – be it better communication skills, or time. This can be due to stratification within communities, and an uneven distribution or representation of different groups. This can also be due to the structure of existing policies – community groups are inherently inhibited by the framework in which they are developed. Unless participation redistributes in favour of the more disadvantaged citizens then the participation is likely to be of limited use.

Community Cohesion

Improving the physical environment will not give people an understanding of different cultures or races. But the consultation process and urban projects which engage different users will result in the interaction of different groups, as will everyday public spaces of interaction – even if this ‘interaction’ is as basic as recognising your neighbour. Improvement to the built environment will facilitate greater connection between areas, hopefully minimising the disjointed nature of regeneration.

Is There Anything We Can Do?

This is not a solution to the broader economic problems of the area. The population of Barking and Dagenham is subject to greater economic and social forces than can be addressed within the Borough. Whilst there are national policies which attempt to address unemployment and disadvantage these need to be fully integrated with the local. What is proposed here is a series of small interventions that enhance people’s lives by improving their physical environment, developing their skills and increasing their opportunities for social interaction.



14 An idea of the changes this proposition could make.

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