

Peter Davies

We believe that many tenants in the private rented sector are those on low incomes. BaNES own Feasibility Study cites, as examples of people who live in shared rented accommodation: young professionals, students, housing benefit claimants, people in slum rentals, immigrants, asylum seekers and those in temporary accommodation. These groups will be disproportionately affected by an Article 4 Direction on HMOs, compared to those who can afford to live in their own home. This has been identified in the Equality Impact Assessment report produced alongside the feasibility study, with the main points being included in the report.

It has been suggested that the potential solutions will, as part of the core strategy, work towards “creating positive lives for everyone”; however the equality impact assessment identified two groups of residents who are most likely to be negatively affected. These groups are those with lower salaries and students, who are both likely to be young people and BME residents as the wards with the highest BME populations are also those with high concentrations of HMOs. The negative effects identified included the restriction of the housing stock and thus an increase in rental prices.

This contravenes BaNES Equal Opportunities Policy which states; “the council is committed to equality of opportunity and action to ensure that its employees and the people it serves are not discriminated against or receive less favourable treatment on the basis of their: age, financial or economic status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin” amongst other things.

While it is important that an Equality Impact Assessment is conducted to identify these risks, there has been no suggestion in the report of how it will be ensured that discrimination doesn't occur as a result of this policy.

Bath and North East Somerset accommodates a balanced and diverse community; and thus requires a flexible, fluid and affordable housing stock. An Article 4 Direction would work directly against this by limiting a vital supply of affordable housing.