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**University College London  
Faculty of the Built Environment  
The Bartlett School of Planning**

**The emerging Hong Kong diaspora in London:  
Understanding the early-stage interactions between Hong  
Kong immigrants under the British Nationals (Overseas)  
Visa scheme and the London housing market.**

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Being a dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as part of the requirements for the award of MSc Housing and City Planning at University College London:

I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data, and images, as well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.

## **Acknowledgements**

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- The Chinese Association of Tower Hamlets
- The 'Canary Wharf & Isle of Dogs E14 Residents' Facebook Group
- The 'London E14 Hongkongers Community' Facebook Group
- Morgan of the '@urbanplanet.hk' Instagram Page
- The '@bno\_working\_potatoes' Instagram Page

Finally, I must thank my friends and family for their unwavering support throughout my tertiary studies. To my parents, I am forever grateful for all you have given me and the sacrifices you have made along the way. To my friends, thank you all for always believing in me.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation aims to provide some empirical qualitative research into the interactions between Hong Kong immigrants under the British National (Overseas) Visa scheme and the London housing market.

Results from structured questionnaire reveal that property location is shown to be the most significant housing determinant for new Hongkongers. However, spatially, there are signs of co-ethnic clustering in traditionally 'homogenous' neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, targeted interviews suggest that the London housing market is unable to accommodate to the housing demands of BNO immigrants both quantitatively and qualitatively.

This dissertation concludes with a reflection of the London planning for housing system in terms of Local Plan-making and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and proposes several recommendations for the mid- to long-term planning for the housing impact brought by the continuing influx of Hong Kong immigrants.

## **Introduction**

International migration has long been a topic of study by scholars in public policy and urban planning fields. Its associated impact to host cities is multi-faceted and manifest in both socio-economic and built environment terms. In particular, the arrival of new immigrants is almost always followed by an increased demand in housing (Vargas-silva, 2019). Planning, adapting and accommodating to such an additional housing demand has thus become a major planning challenge for popular immigration destinations worldwide.

This dissertation aims to provide some qualitative research into the Hong Kong diaspora in London, an emerging immigrant group that has not been widely studied in existing academic literature. It explores the two-way early-stage interactions between Hong Kong immigrants and the London housing market, specifically, how the housing needs and demands of Hong Kong immigrants are being met and accommodated.

‘Hong Kong immigrants’ in this dissertation refers to those who have moved to the United Kingdom (‘UK’) under the British Nationals (Overseas) (‘BNO’) Visa Scheme. Hong Kong citizens residing in the UK under other immigration routes are not considered here. As a former British colony, Hong Kong citizens born under British rule were eligible to be BNOs, a special type of British nationality with no right of abode in the UK. The Visa Scheme was established in January 2021 exclusively for existing BNOs and their dependents, granting them a maximum 5-year visa with the right to work and study in the UK (Home Office, 2021). An estimated total of 5.4 million people is eligible for the visa (Howard, 2022).

The scheme follows rising political tensions between Hong Kong and mainland China post-handover, especially since largescale protests erupted in 2019, and is seen as an eventual path to Indefinite Leave to Remain and full British citizenship (Lau, 2022). Unlike other current UK visas,<sup>1</sup> the BNO Visa Scheme is origin-specific, and has effectively laxer eligibility criteria and regulations. As of March 2022, more than 123,000 visa applications have been received for the scheme (Home Office, 2022); whilst the Home Office’s Impact Assessment (2020) estimates up to over 1 million people to ultimately settle in the UK under this route by 2025. Hongkongers thus emerge as a growing immigrant group with an increasing presence in the UK that is research worthy.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Tier 2 Skilled Worker Visa which requires employer sponsorship, or the Tier 4 Student Visa which is dependent on the length of the course of study.

A sizable influx of immigrants in the foreseeable future is inevitably expected to put further strain on the UK housing market, which is already said to be suffering from a dire ‘housing crisis’ (Robertson, 2017). With the No Recourse to Public Funds condition of the BNO Visa, Hong Kong immigrants are ineligible for any social housing allocations from local councils, which essentially leaves them with the private housing market as their only viable choice of housing. Although the UK central government has announced a support package earmarked for BNO Hongkongers worth up to £43.1 million, there is no specific mention from the government how it plans to manage their housing needs on a local authority level, as well as the possible impact on the private rental and/or buyers’ housing market (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities, 2021).

This dissertation focusses on the Greater London area, which is reported to be the most popular destination amongst BNO immigrants, and at the same time, the epicentre of the UK’s ‘housing crisis’ (Kan et al., 2021; Rodwell, 2021). This research will enrich understandings of the housing needs and demands of Hong Kong immigrants in London, as a ‘sub-ethnicity’ under the wider ethnic Chinese diaspora, through residence patterns and their determinants. It unpacks the internal and external factors leading to such outcomes, and seeks to understand the two-way interactions between the London housing market and Hong Kong immigrants, thereby establishing whether the London housing market has been able to meet the needs and demands of Hongkongers in their early stages of settling in the UK.

The main research question (‘RQ’) of this dissertation is *how is the London housing market accommodating the needs and demands of Hong Kong immigrants?*

Five subsidiary research objectives (‘ROs’) are also formulated to complement the main research question.

1. To explore current scholarly debates on immigrant housing patterns and the London housing market.
2. To investigate the housing choices and patterns of Hong Kong immigrants upon their first arrival in London and analyse the ‘determinants’ and contributing factors behind said outcomes.
3. To evaluate the interactions between Hong Kong immigrants and the London housing market.



4. To evaluate the role of London local planning authorities in accommodating the housing needs of Hong Kong immigrants.
5. To formulate practicable policy suggestions in terms of planning for housing for Hong Kong immigrants in London.

## **Literature Review**

Focusing on three key aspects, this chapter presents and explores prevailing debates in academic literature relevant to the RQ in terms of immigrant housing patterns and the London housing market (RO1).

### **1. Immigrant Housing Choices and their determinants**

While there has been much academic attention on immigrant housing choices and patterns, a significant proportion of it revolves around social housing settlements either for refugees, asylum seekers, or underprivileged migrants (Lymperpolou, 2013). This highlights that the manifold interpretations of the notion of ‘immigrants’. Anderson and Blinder (2019) note that there is no consensus on a single definition of ‘migrants’. Meanwhile, ‘immigrants’ and ‘migrants’ are increasingly being used interchangeably to describe people who have relocated within or across countries, though ‘immigrants’ is more commonly used to refer to those who intend to be settled long-term in their new place of living (ibid.). Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, the term ‘immigrants’ will be used throughout.

Research on immigrant housing choices is often challenging as the process can be both time- and data-intensive. Nonetheless, existing studies have revealed several common themes that are central to informing and influencing immigrant housing choices. It is important to highlight that one’s ‘housing outcome’ does not necessarily equate to ‘housing choice’, as it is argued by Jansen et al. (2011) that the former is the result of the interactions between the internal and external factors at play.

#### *Immigrant Density*

First, Lymperpolou (2013) argues that ethnic composition is the predominant determinant of immigrant housing choice, with greater importance than the local labour market conditions. This view is shared by other scholars including Phillips (2007) and Aslund (2005). Phillips (2007) notes a tendency for new immigrants to select areas with high co-ethnic immigrant density, since immigrants would be able to benefit from community infrastructure, extended cultural and/or social ties, as well as a de facto ‘recreation’ of their pre-emigration lives, all of which smoothens their transitions into foreign environments and contributes to a greater sense of belonging (Kobayashi et al., 2011). This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of ‘family immigration’, where housing patterns of new immigrants are largely pre-determined by location decisions of their related predecessors (Hatton and Wheatley Price, 1999).

Meanwhile, Aslund (2005) contends that this preference transcends beyond co-ethnicity in a sense newly settled immigrants would look for areas with high existing immigrant densities irrespective of origin. These areas with dense immigrant settlements are typically coupled with a higher extent of acceptance towards diverse population groups and hence attract more new immigrants (Damm, 2009). The shared community experience and sentiment of immigrants is identified by Logan et al. (2002) to be a significant pull factor in determining the housing choices of new immigrants. The concept of ‘cultural distinctiveness’ also emerges here, where non-west immigrants in Western contexts are more likely to live in ethnically dense areas than other Western immigrants due to their cultural distances to the host societies (Zorlu and Mulder, 2008).

These findings mostly conform to the Spatial Assimilation Theory (‘SAT’), a core theory which posits that early-stage immigrants tend to first settle in ‘ethnically dense and/or deprived areas’, then subsequently move to conventionally ‘non-immigrant’ areas after successful cultural and economic assimilation (Allen and Turner, 1996).

However, such a view is not uncontested. A major caveat is that socio-economic circumstances of individuals and/or households also play a significant role in informing immigrant housing choices. For example, both Bartel (1989) and McDonald (2004) observed that immigrants with higher income, education attainment (i.e., undergraduate degree or above) and language abilities tend not to live in areas with high numbers of co-ethnic migrants. This phenomenon is possibly explained by the fact that these relatively well-off immigrants have already, or are on balance much more likely to easily achieve cultural and economic assimilation as outlined in the SAT. There is even an implicit assumption that ethnic density and socio-economic deprivation are correlated.

Moreover, this argument somewhat overlooks the non-homogenous housing needs across different ethnic groups. Peach (1998) notes that housing determinants of BAME immigrants in the UK are often influenced by their respective cultural and/or ethnic traditions and practices.

#### *Local socio-economic circumstances*

Secondly, it is also argued that the socio-economic circumstances of particular areas influence immigrant housing decisions. Lymperpolou’s (2013) research identified that areas with higher levels of immigrant populations in the UK were mostly positively correlated with the availability of rental housing as well as ease of access to employment. This corresponds with

the previous findings of Zorlu and Mulder (2008), which theorised that immigrants would more likely to initially move to socio-economically deprived areas in order to benefit from the ‘cheap housing’. With reference to the SAT, deprived areas could also be seen as ‘zones of transition’ (as in the works by Park and Burgess (1925) and Schwirian (1983)) on a stepladder for new immigrants in achieving societal assimilation.

However, such an argument is built on the premise that these immigrants have limited economic assets, hence the availability of ‘affordable’ housing would be a major determinant for their housing choice.

### *‘Spatial Pioneers’*

Highlighted by Robinson et al. (2007), the concept of ‘spatial pioneers’ refers to those in their early stages of immigrant settlement who only have employment and/or education ties in host societies, with limited to no family and/or community connections there. They are typically characterised as ‘economic migrants’ who emigrated seeking better work and/or education opportunities (UNHCR, 2006). Their housing choices and determinants are thus shaped by their individual preferences, and are seen as ‘pioneers’ in a sense that they create ‘pathways’ for future co-ethnic immigrants.

## **2. Impacts of the international immigration on housing markets**

International immigration has increasingly been blamed for driving up property prices in housing markets worldwide (Larkin et al., 2019). Simple supply and demand economics would intuitively suggest that, assuming an unchanged amount of housing supply, an increased demand of housing given rise from additional immigrant population would result in pushed up housing prices. This is further supported by scholars studying different housing markets, who have identified links between international migration and rises in house prices, although UK- and London-specific literature on the topic remains scarce (Vargas-silva, 2013).

In their study of eight western countries, Cochrane and Poot (2019) argue that a 1% increase in international immigration may be expected to cause rents to increase by 0.5% to 1% on average, and the effect on property prices is about double that. Moreover, the effects of a demand-pull price increase in housing can be significant. In the case of Vancouver, Canada as highlighted by Moos and Skaburskis (2010), the large influx of skilled and wealthy east Asian immigrants since the 1990s has effectively overwhelmed its property market with excess pressure for housing, which then led to substantial price increases in established and built-up

parts of the city. These arguments thus illustrate the prevailing view that international immigration ultimately drives down overall housing affordability, especially in liberal markets where immigrants are most likely to access housing through the unsubsidised private market, as further explored below.

However, Vargas-silva (2019) cautions against overgeneralising and attributing the negative impacts experienced by the housing market to international immigration as the quantitative research methodology used inherently carries great uncertainties. Cochrane and Poot (2019) also acknowledges that immigration overall has only been a ‘minor contributor’ to soaring property prices.

### **3. London’s Planning for Housing mechanism**

Since Thatcher’s Conservative government came to power in 1979, the London (and indeed the rest of the England/UK’s) housing market has long been described as highly liberal in nature (Barlow and Duncan, 1994). Liberal housing markets are often characterised by minimal government intervention in housing provision, and a clear dualist distinction between the social and private rental sub-markets, meaning that housing is only provided as a form of social welfare to those in most need (Arbaci, 2019). This was evidenced by Thatcherite policies such as the state’s withdrawal in building council homes and the introduction of Right to Buy, which left huge implications on both the housing market and the housing planning mechanism (Jeffreys and Lloyd, 2015).

Under the current planning system, all local planning authorities (‘LPAs’) nationwide are required to produce their own statutory Development Plan (i.e., Local Plan). All decisions on planning applications, by law (Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Under the Development Plan, a housing target is set, stipulating the number of homes to needed to be delivered over the plan period. In the London context, the incumbent Mayor of London prepares the London Plan, which is an overarching Development Plan for the whole of Greater London.

Throughout the plan-making process, there is a huge emphasis for an ‘evidence-based’ approach to be adopted. The National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021) states that all planning policies should be ‘underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence’. This ensures

that while the evidence does not necessarily dictate or steer the policy response, it allows the proposed policies to be informed and well-justified (DLUHC, 2021).

In terms of housing, quantitative evidence is necessary for development plans to establish the amount of housing needed. This is typically done through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment ('SHMA'), where the government-prescribed standard method is used alongside other demographic data and projections to calculate the estimated number of new homes needed by tenure and type based on housing demand (GLA, 2017).

The latest 2017 SHMA conducted by GLA has identified a net annual need for ~66,000 additional homes between 2016 and 2041. Although the GLA SHMA is London-wide, London LPAs are also encouraged to commission SHMAs for their boroughs on a sub-regional basis. The results of the GLA SHMA were then used to support the 2021 London Plan's proposed housing target figures, i.e., 522,870 new net completions between 2019/20 to 2028/29. A borough-level breakdown of the 10-year target is also presented.

In terms of its methodology, the SHMA first begins with the official population projections, then makes additional adjustments to reflect market signals, local employment levels, and migration trends etc. The result of the SHMA is an 'Objectively Assessed Need' ('OAN'), which then translates into an annual housing requirement number, although it has also been argued that it is methodologically deficient when it comes to the use of data projection models to reflect future population trends (Liu and Takagi, 2022). The SHMA flowchart is presented in Figure 1 (Turley, 2015).

However, given that local councils have little involvement and participation in housing supply as explored above, meeting the housing targets as set out in SHMAs is often a huge challenge. Adams (2011) argues that the housing market is heavily reliant on private for-profit developers, whilst LPAs play a relatively passive role in only carrying out statutory approval and development management of proposed housing development schemes.

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Overall, this literature review reveals two research gaps in existing literature which this dissertation aims to fill: first, the housing patterns and determinants of Hong Kong immigrants in London; and second, the connections between international migration and the planning for housing mechanism, specifically, how housing demands of immigrants are being accommodated.

SHMA Methodology

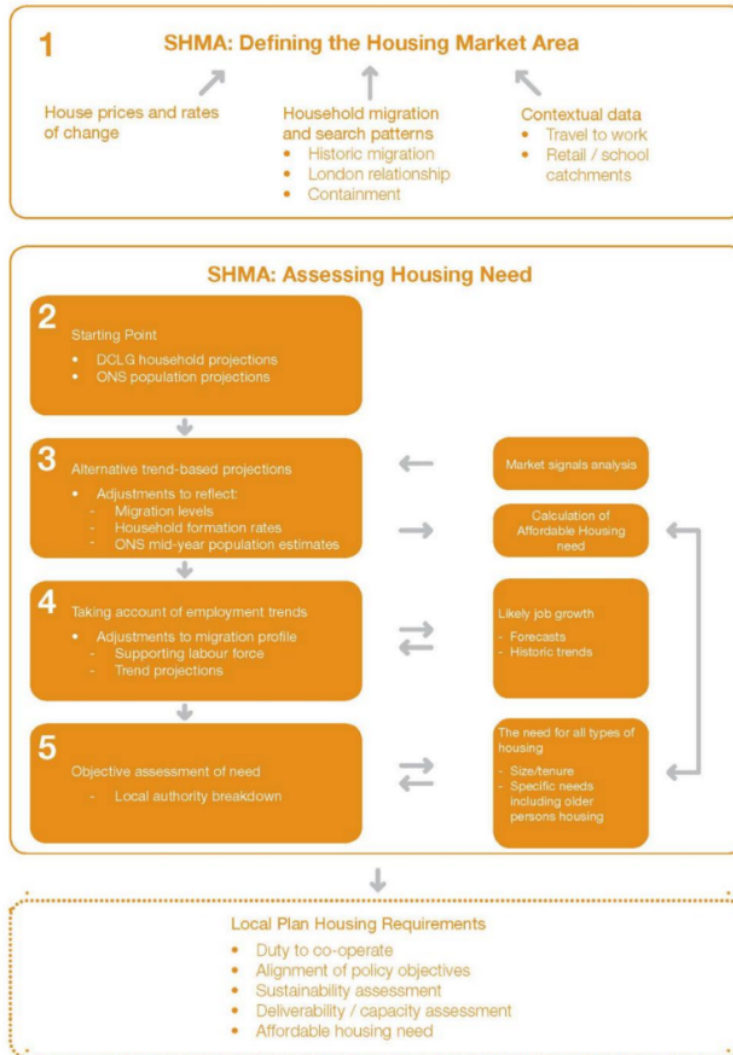


Figure 1 – The SHMA Methodology Flowchart (Turley, 2015)

## Research Framework & Methodology

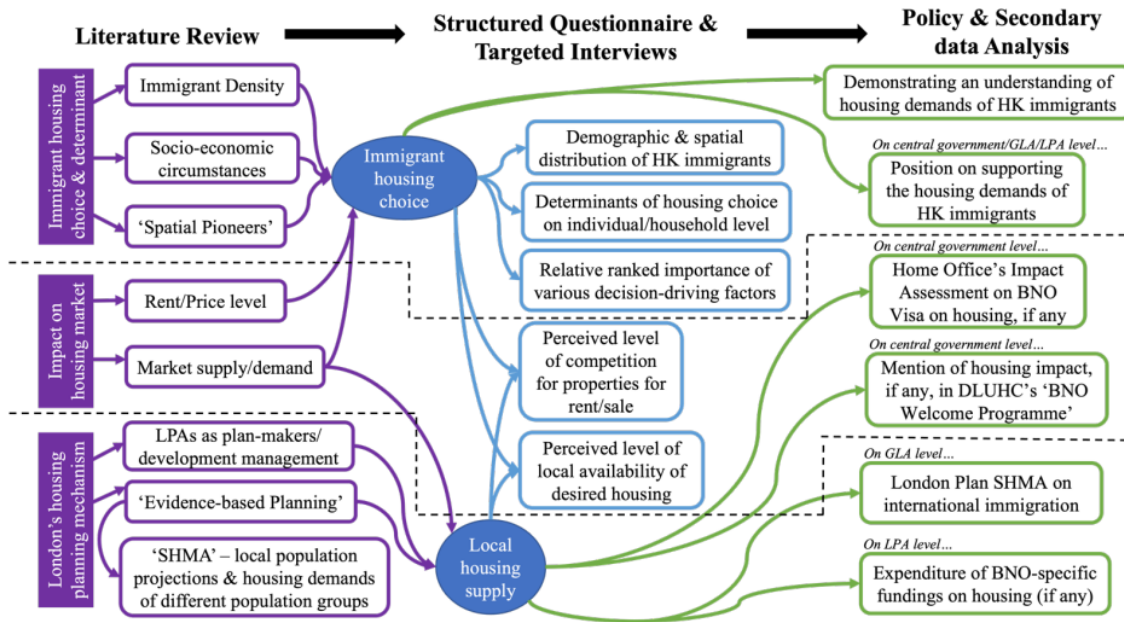


Figure 2 – Conceptual Framework of this dissertation (Own work)

The overall conceptual framework to be adopted throughout this dissertation is presented above, which demonstrates this dissertation's thought process in approaching the main RQ. It features the various theoretical concepts (categorised into three aspects) which have emerged from the Literature Review, and connects them with the two key planning issues that this dissertation aims to study respectively (i.e., immigrant housing choice and local housing supply), before branching out to specific areas to focus on during the data collection stage. The framework highlights how (international) immigration and the planning for housing mechanism are highly interconnected planning issues which require a wider holistic view in understanding them.

In terms of research methodology, an inductive qualitative research strategy is adopted for this dissertation, which allows for a tentative hypothesis and theory to be reached at the end of the research process following observation and pattern recognition during the data collection stage (Blaikie, 2010). The use of an inductive methodology here is justified since Hong Kong BNO immigrants in the UK is a novel emerging phenomenon with very limited coverage in existing literature.

Meanwhile, as a Hong Kong immigrant myself, I am aware of my positionality in this research, particularly how my own previous experiences regarding housing in London could lead to certain personal biases and/or preconceptions. Therefore, the use of any of my 'situated' prior



knowledge would be well-acknowledged in order to maintain objectivity throughout this research and avoid imposing my personal preconceptions onto the subject matter (Yanow, 2000).

The research data collection process is carried out in three stages, i.e., Structured Questionnaires, Targeted Interviews, and Policy and Secondary data analysis, as summarised below. This three-pronged methodology echoes with the three highlighted aspects of the Literature Review in approaching the RQ from the perspective of new Hong Kong immigrants, the London housing market and London local authorities respectively.

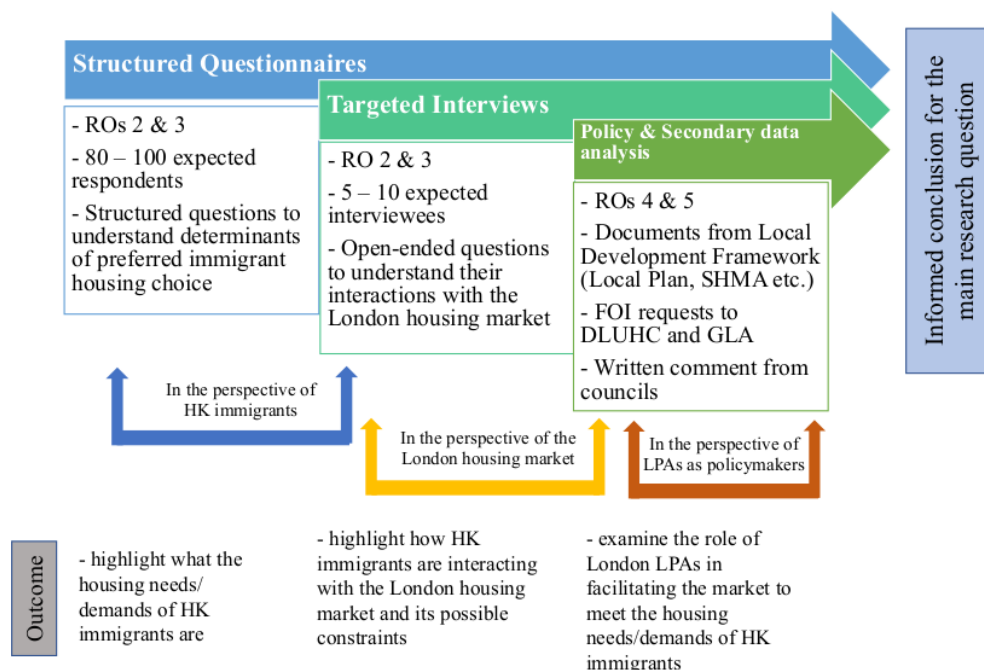


Figure 3 – Summary of the research data collection methodology (Own work)

### 1. Structured Questionnaires

Structured introductory questionnaires (disseminated online through Microsoft Forms) were sent out to Hong Kong immigrants currently in London under the BNO Visa Scheme. The expected number of questionnaire respondents is around 80 to 100 to ensure a reasonably significant and representative sample size. Random sampling was used to minimise any bias in the selection process of questionnaire respondents.

The questionnaire is expected to take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Questions were presented in both English and Chinese, and revolved around the types and characteristics of housing that they currently live in, including but not limited to location (London borough level),

size, tenure (freehold/leasehold, assured shorthold – length of lease), housing typology (new-built flats, ex-local authority flats, terraced house, (semi-)detached property etc.). Reflecting on the findings of the literature review, questionnaire respondents were first asked to rank the different ‘decision driving factors’, or ‘determinants’ which influenced their housing choices and outcomes (i.e., Questions 11 to 12). The five categories include:

- i. Budget and/or lease term
- ii. Property location
- iii. Housing Typology
- iv. Neighbourhood
- v. Others (to be elaborated by the respondent)

A weighted average score (‘WAS’) for each category could then be calculated upon compiling all obtained responses. This is to all general trends across all questionnaire participants to be analysed quantitatively, as each respondent would rank the various determinants in different orders. As questionnaire respondents would rank the five categories in descending order of relative importance from ‘1’ to ‘5’, the option with the lowest weighted average score would therefore be the most important housing determinant across all surveyed respondents. The same process would be repeated for sub-categories under the five broad categories (i.e., Questions 13 to 20).

Results obtained from the questionnaire would ultimately make up the broad evidence base for discussion throughout this dissertation, and will serve to inform the analyses of **ROs 2 and 3**. As of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022, a total of 94 online responses was obtained. A copy of the questionnaire questions is attached in Appendix A.

## **2. Targeted Interviews**

Expanding on the findings of the introductory questionnaires, targeted interviews with selected respondents will be conducted. It is expected that around 5 to up to 10 interviews would be conducted, subject to interviewee availability. Stratified sampling was used such that the selected interviewees would ideally represent different demographic groups (e.g., age, family size) and localities across London (e.g., Inner London versus the suburbs in Outer London), which allows this research to highlight the varying housing needs and demands of Hong Kong immigrants in London both demographically and spatially.

Interview questions were presented in the interviewees’ preferred language, and were mostly open-ended to encourage candid responses from interviewees. Questions revolved around their personal experiences of interacting with the London housing market throughout the process of

securing their accommodation upon their arrival (**RO3**). The interviews would also be an opportunity to further investigate on their determinants of housing choices in London (**RO2**). In particular, the interviews will explore nuances between the internal (guided by individual preferences) and external factors at play (e.g., availability of housing stock, property price/rent levels etc., i.e., not relating to the individuals) which had shaped and influenced first-hand their housing outcomes. The analysis will thus reveal the current possible constraints of the London housing market in meeting the housing needs of Hong Kong immigrants.

Audio interview recordings would be made, subject to the interviewee's consent, such that interview responses could be transcribed, which allows for general themes and patterns to be identified and recognised for further qualitative analysis (Blaikie, 2010).

As of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022, a total of 5 online interviews was conducted. A summary of the interviews conducted is attached in Appendix B.

### **3. Policy & Secondary Data Analysis**

The third component of this research comprises a Policy and Secondary Data analysis, which will involve a close examination of the housing planning mechanism of two London boroughs as case studies of how local planning authorities are accommodating the housing needs of Hong Kong immigrants (**ROs 4 and 5**). The boroughs (one each from inner and outer London – in order to highlight their possibly contrasting natures in terms of housing demand, supply and planning) chosen will be based on the questionnaire results previously obtained and reflect the localities where there are clusters or higher concentrations of Hong Kong immigrants. Reference will be made to the Local Development Framework of the chosen boroughs, especially the Local Plan, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Housing Need Survey, and any relevant planning guidance(s) on housing supply and assessing immigrant housing needs. As established in the Introduction, although there has already been government-allocated funding for local councils on both national and Greater London levels to ensure the new immigrants are 'given support to successfully integrate in their new communities', there is little to no existing public information on the detailed expenditure breakdown (DLUHC, 2021). Therefore, Freedom of Information ('FOI') requests were made to DLUHC and GLA to ascertain how much, if at all, government funding under the DLUHC's 'BNO Welcome Programme' and the GLA's 'Local Welcome Hong Kong Fund' has been granted to the boroughs, and how much of the grant has been earmarked to supporting the housing needs of Hong Kong immigrants. This secondary analysis will shed light on the capacity and possible constraints of local authorities, as local housing planning policy makers, in actively supporting

the London housing market in order to meet the needs of Hongkongers as new immigrants in the UK. Responses from both DLUHC and GLA were received on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022.

Lastly, follow-up requests for a written response would be made to the relevant planning authorities and/or local councillors of the boroughs in order to better understand the issue from the perspective of local councils.

## **Statement of Ethical Consideration**

There is low ethical risk associated with this dissertation.

All participants for questionnaires and interviews (online and/or face-to-face) were recruited on a voluntary basis, and were free to withdraw themselves from the research process should they feel uncomfortable to continue or disclose certain information. All interviewees received a copy of the Information and Consent Form, and their consent to partake in this research was obtained prior to the interview. Voice recordings of interviews were only be made upon consent of the interviewees.

All data obtained from questionnaires and interviews were anonymised. Only general demographic characteristics such as age group, occupation, borough of residence etc. would be used to describe the research participants. No identifiable personal data would be collected. All contact information of interviewees would be destroyed upon formal submission of this dissertation. Most, if not all, research participants were of ethnic Hong Kong origin.

All secondary data and sources used will be obtained from publicly available sources, and are referenced properly throughout.

## Analysis & Discussion

### RO2: Housing choices and determinants of BNO immigrants

#### *Overview of existing housing choice*

Responses for the introductory structured questionnaire revealed a wide range of existing housing choices for BNO immigrants across London boroughs. This section presents an overview of their existing housing choices, which would be further analysed in the following sections.

Regarding borough of residence, there was a clear dominance of Sutton residents, which accounted for 44 (46.8%) respondents. The three London boroughs with the highest numbers of respondents were Sutton, Barnet (13), and Tower Hamlets (7) respectively, while the remaining respondents scattered across other parts of the city. Considering their spatial distribution, there were generally more respondents living in outer London boroughs than in inner London (see Figure 4).

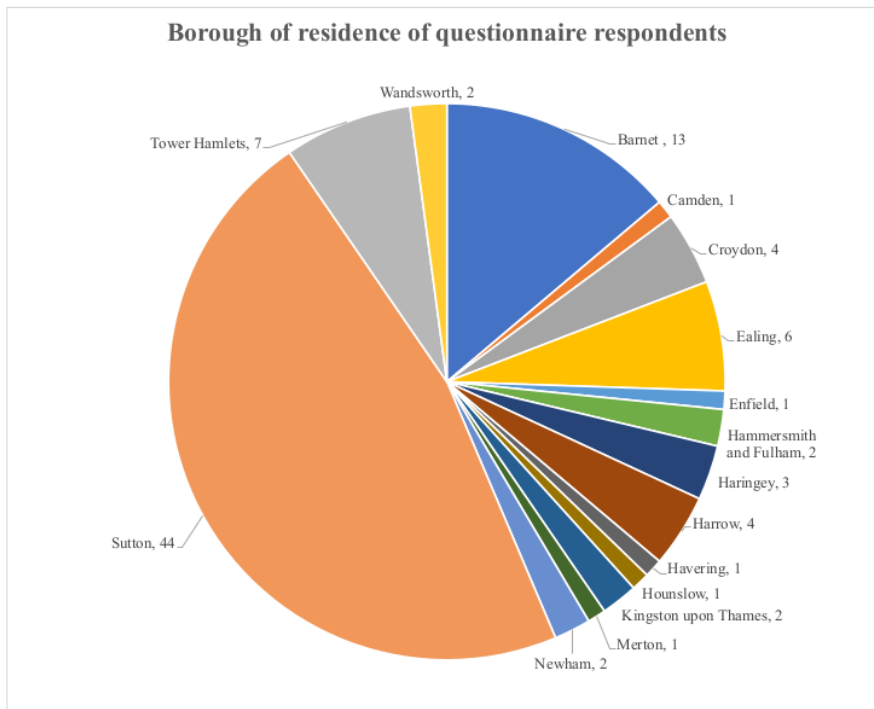


Figure 4 – Borough of residence of questionnaire respondents

In terms of housing tenure, the majority of BNO immigrants (71, 75%) currently have Assured Shorthold Tenancies ('ASTs'), typically one year in length, but lease terms varied from less than a month to three years (see Figure 5). There are also a small proportion of respondents

(20, 21.3%) who are living in freehold and/or leasehold properties as owner-occupiers, whilst one respondent reported to be living in temporary accommodation (see Figure 6).

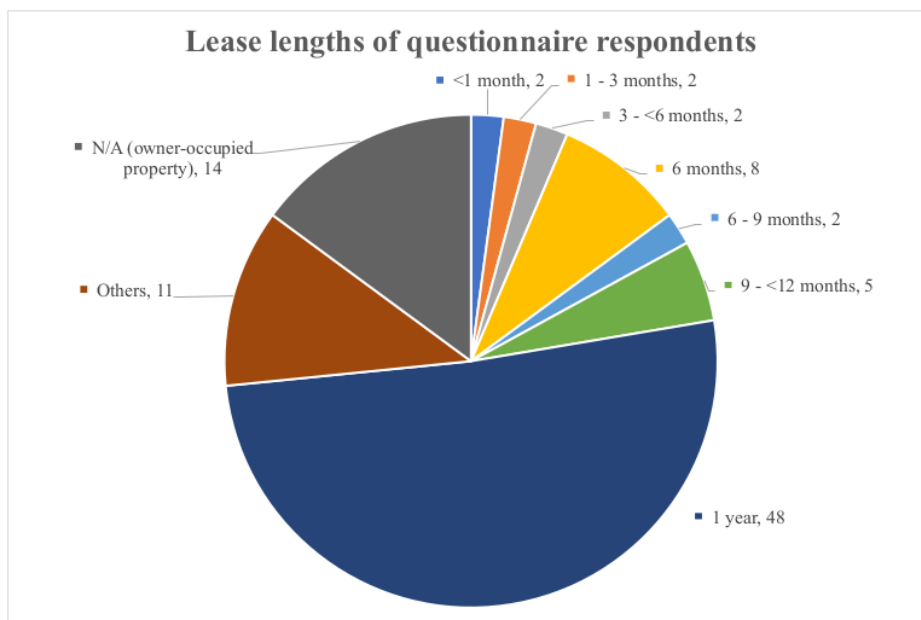


Figure 5 – Lease lengths of questionnaire respondents

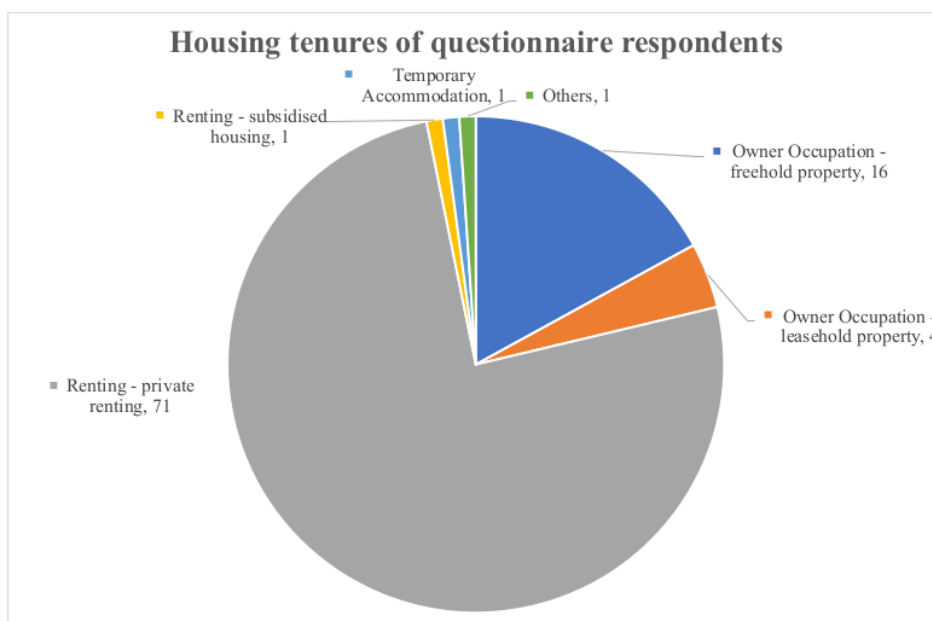


Figure 6 – Housing tenures of questionnaire respondents

Meanwhile, questionnaire responses highlighted a divergence in terms of housing typology (see Figure 7). While over half of the respondents (54, 57.4%) reported to be living in purpose-built flats (25 in new-builds,<sup>2</sup> 29 in non-new-builds, and 2 in ex-local authority housing), some 36.2% of total respondents lived in houses (including 14 in terraced houses, 4 in converted flats, and 16 in semi-/detached properties) instead.

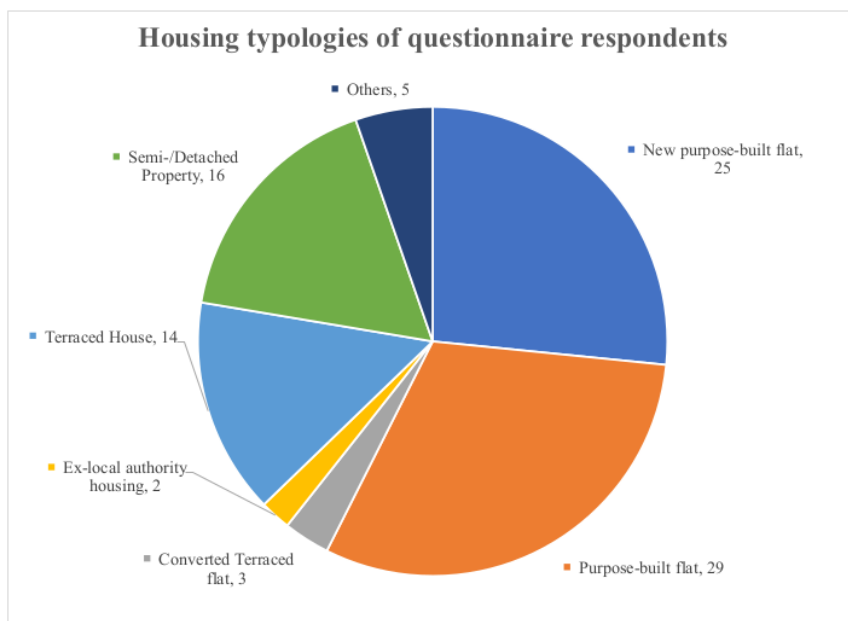


Figure 7 – Housing typologies of questionnaire respondents

On the other hand, in measuring property size, the questionnaire followed the England Housing Survey's (2021) classification methodology for usable dwelling floor area. While no particular trend was observed, responses showed that most respondents were living in domestic properties ranging between 50 to 69 squared metres in size, with the other groups having similar shares of respondents (see Figure 8). This is generally in line with existing data from Joyner (2021), which placed London's average property size at 705 squared feet, i.e., 65.5 sqm.

<sup>2</sup> Defined as having been completed within the past two years (Savills, 2022).



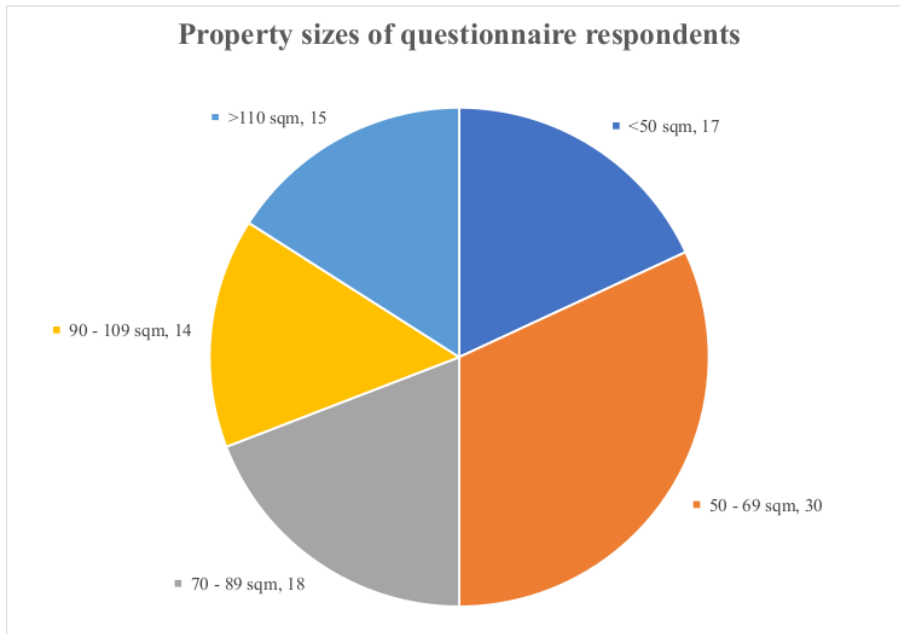


Figure 8 – Property sizes of questionnaire respondents

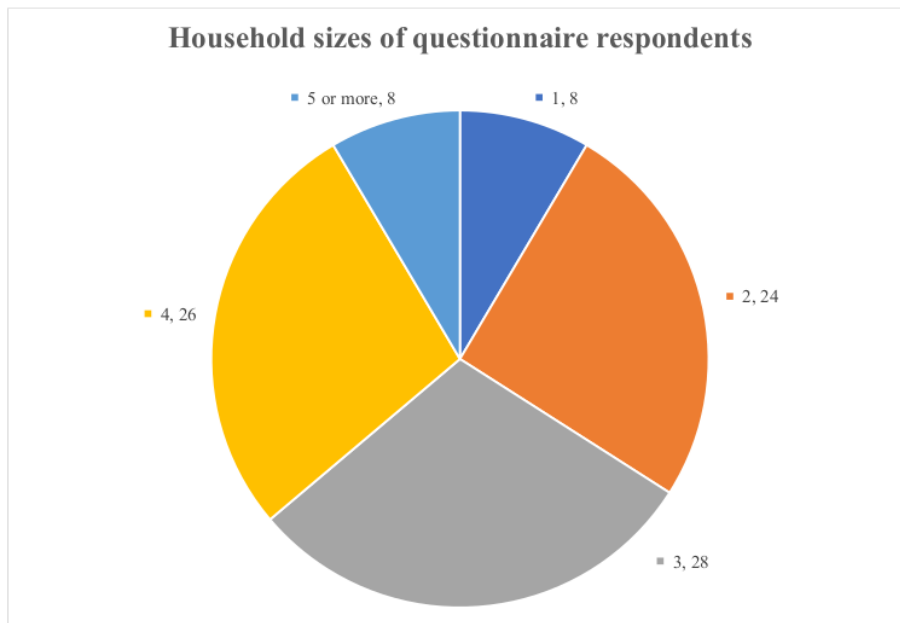


Figure 9 – Household sizes of questionnaire respondents

Lastly, the average overall household size<sup>3</sup> for all questionnaire respondents was 3.02, while most surveyed households ranged from 2 to 4 people in size (see Figure 9 above). This includes 13 (13.8%) respondents who are living in a flat-share or a ‘House in Multiple Occupation’. This is slightly higher than the average London household size of 2.47 (GLA, 2016).

#### *Determinants of housing choice*

As established in the Methodology section, weighted average scores (‘WAS’) for each of the five categories of housing choice determinants are calculated and presented below (see Table 1) – the lower the WAS, the greater the significance of the determinant.

It should be noted that ‘property location’ and the wider ‘neighbourhood’ that the property is situated in are seen as two separate factors in this dissertation and would not be used interchangeably (Jenks and Dempsey, 2007); the former refers to the physical locational attributes of a property on a ‘property-specific’ and/or ‘micro’ level, while the latter is a socio-spatial concept on a broader ‘residential area’ level more concerned with ‘spatially-based attributes’ such as infrastructural, demographic, environmental and social-interactive characteristics (Galster, 2001).

<b>Determinant</b>	<b>Weighted Average Score (‘WAS’)</b>
Property location	1.652
Budget and/or lease term	2.065
Neighbourhood	3.248
Housing typology	3.519
Others	4.545

*Table 1 – Ranked WAS of the five broad determinant categories by questionnaire respondents*

#### *Property location (WAS 1.652)*

Overall, ‘property location’ is found to be the most significant determinant of housing choice considered by surveyed BNO immigrants, with 46.8% of total respondents ranking it as the most influential factor.

In particular, under property location, ‘proximity to place of work and/or school’ was voted the most important factor of consideration (WAS 2.127), which is closely followed after by proximity to the local town centre (WAS 2.359) and public transportation network (WAS 2.359) respectively (see Table 2).

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<sup>3</sup> Defined as ‘a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address’ (Office for National Statistics, 2019).

<b>Sub-determinant under ‘Property Location’</b>	<b>Weighted Average Score (‘WAS’)</b>
Proximity to place of work and/or school	2.127
Proximity to the local town centre (e.g., shops and services along the local high street)	2.359
Proximity to central London (Zone 1)	2.359
Proximity and/or ease of access to public transport	3.838
Proximity to Hong Kong-style establishments (e.g., supermarkets, eateries, community infrastructure etc.)	4.51
Others	5.802

*Table 2 – Ranked WAS of sub-determinants under ‘Property Location’*

This dissertation believes that such a pattern is largely attributable to the fact that many new BNO immigrants are either economically active and seeking employment opportunities in London, or are families with young children looking to move nearer to their desired schools (see point on School Catchment Area below), or even a combination of both scenarios (Lau, 2022). Therefore, it would be reasonable for them to live in locations that are close to (or easily accessible to) key places of work and/or school.

However, a notable observation is that factors such as proximity to central London and Hong Kong-style establishments (e.g., restaurants, supermarkets and community centres etc.) were not given high priorities as originally expected. Interviewee A, who ranked the two factors at 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> places respectively, expressed that they are seen as ‘bonuses’ rather than the fundamental determinants.

*‘It’s not like I would have to be in central London very often. (...) For me, making sure my kids would be able to get to school easily is definitely more of an important concern!’*

*– Interviewee A (in Cantonese)*

*Financial Budget and/or lease term (WAS 2.065)*

<b>Sub-determinant under ‘Budget and/or Lease Term’</b>	<b>Weighted Average Score (‘WAS’)</b>
Property price/rent level	1.099
Flexibility of lease length	2.713
Incurred Property Costs (e.g., Council Tax, Management Fees, Ground Rent etc.)	2.716

Choice of a break clause	3.649
Others	4.831

Table 3 – Ranked WAS of sub-determinants under ‘Budget and/or Lease Term’

Under ‘financial budget and/or lease term’, property price or rent level was overwhelmingly voted as the most significant housing determinant (WAS 1.099). This was not an unexpected result as price/rent level is highly property-specific, and would have direct financial implications on the immigrant’s budget given the high housing costs in London and the long-term commitment of renting/purchasing properties. As highlighted by Westbrook and Bermingham (2021), there is a general expectation amongst BNO immigrants that post-immigration income levels in the UK would be relatively lower than in Hong Kong; moreover, BNO immigrants are required by the Home Office to show proof of income or financial asset to demonstrate that they would be self-sufficient in the UK for at least six months. Therefore, for budget-bound BNO immigrants, typically younger ones with limited savings, housing-related costs make up a significant proportion of their projected expenses in the UK, which makes the property rent/price level an important factor of consideration (Hongkongers in Britain, 2021). Interviewee D, who moved to the UK by himself and is currently living in a flat-share in an ex-local authority council block with two other people, agreed that housing costs was the primary determinant in his housing choice.

*‘With my entry-level graduate salary, I can’t afford to live on my own in London – but living with flatmates has really helped me budget and cut down my living expenses’*

*– Interviewee D (in Cantonese)*

As for the remaining sub-factors, questionnaire responses show that these considerations, while may be important on their own, are on balance of less importance than property price/rent level. For example, incurred property costs (WAS 2.716), such as ground rent, leasehold management fees, council tax etc., would be more relevant to owner-occupiers or property investors; meanwhile flexibilities in lease lengths and break clauses would be favoured by renters.

*Property neighbourhood (WAS 3.248)*

<b>Sub-determinant under ‘Neighbourhood’</b>	<b>Weighted Average Score (‘WAS’)</b>
Local socio-economic statistics (e.g., Crime Rate, Index of Multiple Deprivation etc.)	1.778
Preference for an area with a <b>less</b> diverse ethnic mix (in terms of white British vs BAME)	3.164

School Catchment Area	3.329
Preference for an area <b>with</b> an existing Hong Kong immigrant community	3.852
Preference for an area with a <b>more</b> diverse ethnic mix (in terms of white British vs BAME)	4.444
Preference for an area <b>without</b> an existing Hong Kong immigrant community	4.485
Others	6.952

Table 4 – Ranked WAS of sub-determinants under ‘Neighbourhood’

In terms of the property neighbourhood, ‘local socio-economic statistics’ (WAS 1.778) was the clear winner of the category. This refers to publicly available data on a given neighbourhood area’s performance on aspects such as crime rate and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (‘IMD’) etc. which to a large extent reflect and indicate the neighbourhood’s liveability (Martino et al., 2021).

For example, as highlighted in Figure 4, Sutton is seen to be one of the most popular destinations for amongst surveyed new BNO immigrants in London. Referring to figures from the Metropolitan Police (2022) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019), Sutton has a lower-than-average crime rate than the London average, as well as a lower overall IMD rating, which this dissertation argues constitutes a major pull factor for new immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation argues that these local socio-economic statistics have even more significance for first-time international immigrants like BNOs with no prior knowledge and experience of living in the UK. Interviewee B, who first arrived in Sutton in mid-2021, soon after the BNO Visa Scheme’s launch, cited the borough’s ‘well-performing’ area statistics as her main determinant behind her housing decision.

*‘I have been reading up on the area statistics (like income, crime rate, school network etc.) of different London boroughs before I eventually made my decision to move to Sutton – I think it’s my best bet without having any first-hand long-term experience of living in London’*  
– Interviewee B (in Cantonese)

<sup>4</sup> Sutton’s crime rate in 2021 was 62.74 per 1000 population, the 5<sup>th</sup>-lowest in London (Greater London average was 88.67 per 1000 population) (Metropolitan Police, 2022); 15 out of 18 wards in Sutton had IMD ratings lower than the London average (Sutton Council, 2019).

On the other hand, it was also interesting to see that the questionnaire responses generally preferred neighbourhoods with relatively homogenous, or ‘less diverse’ ethnic make-ups (WAS 3.164 versus 4.444 for the converse statement) in terms of white British versus other ‘BAME’ population groups.<sup>5</sup> In other words, areas with predominantly white British residents would be more favoured by surveyed BNO immigrants.

When asked about the reason behind such a preference, Interviewee A acknowledges that it is partly fuelled by pre-existing preconceptions and stereotypes.

*‘On the news (in Hong Kong) we often would read about stabbings and robberies happening in sketchy areas of London, and to be honest I haven’t got the best impression of BAME population groups based on my past personal encounters’*

*– Interviewee A (in Cantonese)*

As problematic as this view may be, it highlights the prevailing connections made between ethnic composition on a local neighbourhood/borough level and perceived levels of ‘safety’ and liveability amongst some BNO immigrants.

In addition, the local school catchment area was also proven to be an important determinant for BNO immigrant households with school-aged children. Mannering (2020) notes that most BNO families would be targeting non-fee-paying schools (e.g., public and state schools) in the UK, which often use a radial catchment area to determine eligibility for admission. Data from estate agent Ellis & Co (2021) show that house prices within the catchment areas of ‘Outstanding-’ or ‘Good-rated’ schools by Ofsted can be up to £200,000 more expensive than an average London residential property. What this shows is that many housing decisions are primarily driven by the nearby school network with many willing to pay a price premium in exchange for admission eligibility in better school catchment areas, a mentality that is also shared by some BNO immigrants.

*‘The primary reason for us to move to the UK was for our son’s education – making sure that he gets to attend a ‘good’ school in London was an important consideration’*

*– Interviewee E (in Cantonese)*

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<sup>5</sup> Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Regarding co-ethnic density, structured questionnaires and targeted interviews revealed quite contrasting findings. While ‘areas with an existing Hong Kong diaspora community’ was generally a recurring theme across interviews, the option was only ranked as the fourth-highest sub-factor (WAS 3.852) across all questionnaire responses.

Interviewee B, who immigrated with his elderly parents, said that the ease and ability to essentially ‘reconstruct’ the existing social network was of high importance.

*‘My parents are old – you can’t really realistically expect them to be able to smoothly integrate into the ‘London way of living’; the most I could do was to ‘emulate’ their ‘Hong Kong way’ here in Sutton as far as possible’*

*– Interviewee B (in Cantonese)*

To Interviewee B (and indeed many other immigrants), moving to the UK under the BNO Visa scheme was an opportunity to leave Hong Kong in search of a ‘better life’; however, as established in the Literature Review, the ‘cultural distance’ between Hong Kong and London, as well as Hongkongers (predominantly of ethnic Chinese background (Hong Kong Government, 2022)) and Londoners (with a diverse mix of ethnic and cultural backgrounds), might not be easily surmountable for all, especially for those who are relatively less adaptable and have little social network. In Interviewee B’s words, walking along the high street in Sutton central, one could easily bump into dozens of new Hong Kong immigrants speaking Cantonese, which makes him feel ‘as if he never left’. In this case, living in areas of high co-ethnic density effectively eliminates the language barrier in daily life, a key manifestation of cultural distance as argued by Zorlu and Mulder (2008), which is shown to be favoured by some surveyed immigrants.

*Housing Typology (WAS 3.519)*

<b>Sub-determinant under ‘Housing Typology’</b>	<b>Weighted Average Score (‘WAS’)</b>
Local socio-economic statistics (e.g., Crime Rate, Index of Multiple Deprivation etc.)	1.62
Preference for <b>split-level houses</b> ((semi-)/detached) over flats	3.272
Preference for <b>new</b> (sold/rented brand new or in well-maintained conditions) over period properties	4.127
Preference for <b>flats</b> over split-level houses ((semi-)/detached)	4.307

Availability of carparking space	4.362
Availability of garden space	5.125
Preference for <b>period</b> properties over new-builds	5.47
Others	7.718

Table 5 – Ranked WAS of sub-determinants under ‘Housing Typology’

Despite being voted the second-least important determinant, there are nonetheless several notable observations over the diverse housing preferences of surveyed immigrants which this dissertation wishes to highlight.

First, questionnaire responses show that property size was the most influential sub-factor under housing typology considered by surveyed immigrants (WAS 1.62). Upon a closer analysis of the responses, this dissertation notes a general trend that the larger the overall household size, the more important the property size would be to them. This again is not an unexpected result. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1989) established that Asian families, especially new immigrants in the West, tend to live in larger multi-generational households, which gives rise to a demand for larger-size properties, or those that allow for further alterations and house extension works to be carried out. Such a preference is also highlighted by Interviewee B.

*‘We wanted a place where both our parents and niece and nephew could stay together – so we’d at least be looking for properties with 3 or more bedrooms and ample living space. 住大屋、養番狗!’<sup>6</sup>*

*– Interviewee B (in Cantonese)*

Moreover, given Hong Kong’s rather infamous lack of living space, it might be the case that some BNO immigrants would want to seek change from their previous way of life in Hong Kong – in terms of housing choice, this may mean living in suburban houses rather than the conventional apartment flats in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Free Press, 2020). Such an imagery and perception of the ‘post-immigration life’ was first mentioned by Kobayashi et al. (2011) studying Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver, Canada. This could be an explanation to why split-level properties were given a higher priority than flats in the questionnaire (WAS 3.272). However, on the contrary, the converse of the same argument can be used to explain why some surveyed Hong Kong immigrants preferred living in flats instead (WAS 4.302). As Interviewee C notes, relocating to the UK was a huge personal milestone which involved drastic changes

<sup>6</sup> Cantonese Chinese slang which roughly translates to ‘To live in a big house and own a dog of foreign breed’.



to his way of life. Therefore, in terms of housing choice, having been used to an apartment/flat-living style, there was a clear preference for flats rather than houses.

*'I've been living in flats all my life in Hong Kong, and to be honest, I have no experience and wouldn't know how to properly maintain and manage a house – lawn-mowing, repairing the staircases, etc.'*

*– Interviewee C (in Cantonese)*

#### Other notable determinants

As for the remaining 17 responses which indicated factors apart from those already listed as their most significant housing determinant, respondents were asked to further elaborate in an open-ended follow-up question. While a large proportion of the responses were identical to some of the sub-categories (for example 'crime rate' and 'school network', which fall under 'socio-economic statistics' and 'school catchment area' respectively under Property Neighbourhood), there were two notable factors which had not been previously considered by this dissertation.

First, pet-friendliness was found to be a significant consideration factor, especially for existing pet-owners and/or larger households with intentions of keeping pets after settling in the UK. Pet-friendliness here not only simply refers to whether pet-keeping is allowed (either by the landlord in rental properties, or by the freeholder in leasehold properties (Voce, 2017)), but also focusses on whether the property and its surrounding neighbourhood encourages and facilitates pet-keeping, for example the availability of front/back garden space and nearby dog-walking routes or public greenspaces (Jackson, 2007).

*'My partner and I have been keeping our pet dog for a long time, it wouldn't make sense for us to leave our pet behind (in Hong Kong) – but it does mean that we'd have to specifically look for properties/areas that accommodate to our pet-keeping needs'*

*– Interviewee E (in Cantonese)*

Moreover, the existing property conditions were also of concern to some BNO immigrants. Several surveyed respondents highlighted that they would prefer furnished properties over unfurnished ones as they have little prior experience nor knowledge about hands-on property refurbishment (e.g., the design, material procurement and builder hiring processes etc.), since they would be moving to the UK for the first time. Ensuring a smooth transition and settling-in post-immigration was thus given a higher priority.

### *Concluding thoughts*

Overall, it is seen that Hongkongers in London, despite an apparent tendency to cluster spatially, have indeed diverse and multifaceted determinants of housing choice. After all, housing choices are highly dependent and influenced by personal preferences and circumstances. What RO2 aims to achieve here is to establish a preliminary evidence base (on the current housing situation of BNO immigrants and their housing determinants) for the remaining parts of this dissertation's discussion as an attempt to fill the current gap in existing literature.

Moreover, this dissertation argues that the findings highlighted here in RO2 mark a departure from this dissertation's Literature Review in the following ways:

First, the Spatial Assimilation Theory ('SAT'), which posits that new immigrants generally tend to choose to live in ethnically diverse and deprived neighbourhoods, does not seem to be applicable here in the case of BNO immigrants. Although this research has identified property price/rent level as a commonly highlighted housing determinant, its significance and/or importance as the determining factor has been outweighed by factors revolving property location. This dissertation believes this is an indication that, perhaps, for Hong Kong immigrants, economic assimilation<sup>7</sup> is not an insurmountable hurdle, hence does not constitute the biggest factor of consideration in their housing choices.

Second, this essay argues that these recent waves of BNO immigrants have somewhat refined and transformed the notion of 'spatial pioneers'. On one hand, Hongkongers are spatial pioneers in a sense that they are relocating to traditionally 'homogenous' neighbourhoods (like Sutton and Barnet), however, instead of being driven solely by employment and/or education ties, housing decisions are also motivated by local socio-economic statistics and other fellow 'pioneers' who have already moved to these areas.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that the housing determinant for BNO immigrants is a combination of both locational considerations and the incentive of growing co-ethnic clusters.

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<sup>7</sup> Defined by Peri and Rutledge (2020) as the comparison of 'income and employment status of immigrants with that of similarly skilled natives'.

### **RO3: Interactions between BNO immigrants and the London housing market**

This section evaluates, from the immigrants' perspective, their interactions with the London housing market.

#### *Perceived sense of competition in securing accommodation*

From their first-hand recounts of the process of securing their housing in London, there was a shared overall sentiment amongst interviewed BNO immigrants that the price levels have been somewhat pushed up, partly due to other fellow Hongkongers also searching for accommodation in the local area.

*'When I was first looking for properties on sale here on Rightmove, listings often came and went as quickly as a week. I was even at a viewing with two other groups of BNO Hongkongers!'*

*– Interviewee B (in Cantonese)*

Interviewee B's experience of purchasing a leasehold flat in Sutton echoes with the data from estate agent Foxtons, which reported that nearly 20% of new registered property buyers in Sutton handled by the firm between April and June 2022 were from Hong Kong (Howard, 2022). This essentially results in a localised competition for residential properties from both BNO immigrants new to the area as well as the existing aggregate local housing demand.

*'We would often share latest property listings and information in our Facebook group (of Sutton BNO immigrants), but we tend to get quite cautious, 'secretive' even, when sharing our own property-hunting experiences.'*

*– Interviewee C (in Cantonese)*

Such a perceived sense of competition was also shared by other interviewees, as pointed out by Interviewee C, who said that his first few attempts at making offers for rental properties were in vain as other Hongkongers had already out-bidden him and secured a lease. To him, this was an almost ironic experience as he did not originally expect to be competing with other fellow BNO immigrants after settling in London.

#### *Perceived sense of local housing availability*

Given the additional housing demand, another issue this dissertation focuses on is the local supply and availability of housing stock in the market. From the perspective of new Hong Kong BNO immigrants, this issue would be best felt first-hand through their perceived sense of local availability of their desired housing.

When asked about whether they felt that there were many property choices available for sale/rental, interviewees generally expressed that options on the market were somewhat limited. As Interviewee C puts it, although he attended more than 10 property viewings, he was only interested and actively considering making offers for a handful of the properties.

*'We all knew deep down that there weren't going to be many choices – but I wanted to keep all my options open. I guess you could say that I was doing viewings just for the sake of doing it'*  
– Interviewee C (in Cantonese)

Apart from a quantitative sense, Interviewee C also noted how the then available properties on Sutton's local housing market did not necessarily meet his preferred criterion or 'determinants' for a desired accommodation, which effectively constricts the perceived level of housing supply and availability.

*'I would personally prefer flats over houses, but if you walk along this area (Sutton) you wouldn't expect to see many apartment blocks.'*  
– Interviewee C (in Cantonese)

#### *Internal and External factors affecting housing outcomes*

Although such perceived levels of competition and local housing availability are highly subjective and dependent on the individual's personal experiences, they are nonetheless useful indicators in reflecting the market situation. As established in the Literature Review, housing outcomes can be seen as a result between the internal and external factors affecting housing choice. However, the dynamics between the two often mean that housing outcomes will not always be able to meet the desired housing criteria and determinants.

This was the case for Interviewee E, who expressed that there was a 'gap' and 'mismatch' between what he had originally preferred and what was available on the housing market. As a result, he lived in a temporary AirBnB flat with his family for the first three months after arriving in London, until he was able to secure and commit to a one-year lease.

*'I think it's a bit of both – I don't think the housing market was able to provide me with enough options and options that I preferred.'*

*– Interviewee E (in Cantonese)*

What this highlights is the constraints of the London housing market in meeting the housing demands of BNO immigrants, which this dissertation argues should in fact be seen as a symptom of deficiencies in the wider planning for housing mechanism, as explored below.

#### **RO4: The role of London LPAs**

Up until this this point, the analysis and discussion of this dissertation has focussed on the perspective of Hong Kong BNO immigrants; this section now moves its analytical lens on the issue of immigrant housing to the perspective of LPAs.

As the local hosts of new arrivals, LPAs arguably experience the most direct impact brought by the UK government's BNO Visa Scheme. However, the role of LPAs in adapting to and managing the housing needs and demands of international immigrants (in this case BNO immigrants) has proved to be an intricate issue: on one hand, although it is the responsibility of LPAs as the plan-making body and local policymaker to take into account the impact of new immigrants on the housing market and to reflect such trends in its housing planning policies, on the other hand, it would be unrealistic and impractical to expect LPAs to:

- (a) Be able to accurately represent the existing immigrant population and project future immigrant inflows without an established evidence base, and
- (b) Effectively intervene in London's highly neo-liberal housing market.

However, upon a closer reading of the Home Office's Impact Assessment on the BNO Visa Scheme prior to its introduction, housing was found to be only mentioned as a 'non-significant impact' on local authorities.

*'Any surge in arrivals of BN(O)s to the UK, particularly where they settled in relatively few areas, could lead to further, disproportionate costs for LAs which may be required to put in place contingency arrangements to meet the demand for services such as education, health care, **housing** and translation. (...) This burden on LAs is not expected to be significant.'*

*– Home Office Impact Assessment (2020)*

The same rhetoric was also used in DLUHC’s guidance provided to local authorities under the ‘BNO Welcome Programme’, which describes the BNO visa as a ‘generous offer’ for eligible Hongkongers who are in return ‘expected to be self-sufficient and contribute to UK society’. The role of LPAs in managing the housing impact brought by the policy was also demarcated.

*‘Local authorities may be expected to **provide some form of support** in managing tenancies, assessing any eligibility for local deposit schemes and understanding rights and entitlements to housing and welfare support.’*

*– DLUHC Guidance for local authorities (2021)*

From above, it seems that the central government is maintaining its long-standing free market and non-interventionist stance over the anticipated housing impact brought by the BNO visa policy, which this dissertation finds somewhat problematic. To understand how this stance from the central government would be followed through and translated into local housing planning and policymaking, this dissertation has selected Sutton (‘LBS’) and Tower Hamlets (‘LBTH’) as the two London boroughs for a further in-depth Policy and Secondary data analysis as set out in the research methodology in Figure 3. LBS and LBTH are selected as they represent the most popular boroughs amongst questionnaire respondents in outer and inner London respectively.

#### *Expenditure of government-allocated funding*

Having received the FOI responses from both DLUHC and GLA, this dissertation was now able to closely examine LBS’s and LBTH’s expenditures of BNO-specific government-allocated funding in detail.

Overall, both LBS and LBTH received funding from GLA under the ‘Local Welcome Hong Kong Fund’ (£28,502 and £30,000 respectively), while LBS also received a further £96,800 from DLUHC under its ‘BNO Welcome Programme’. The expenditure breakdown is show in Tables 6 to 8 below<sup>8</sup>.

Item	Amount budgeted
Insights and outreach: Hiring of staff to support expansion of insights and outreach work	£7,212

<sup>8</sup> All figures are accurate and updated as of the time of writing (DLUHC, 2022; GLA, 2022). Copies of the FOI responses in full are attached in Appendices C and D.

Supporting parents away from Social Isolation and into work: creation, design, and translation of local information packs, organising and delivering event at local children's centre, updating council website, and leading on outreach during summer activities	£7,290
Entrepreneurship and Employment: commissioning and co-developing entrepreneurship sessions for Hong Kong BN(O)s, delivering and hosting a networking event	£14,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,502</b>

Table 6 – Expenditure breakdown of Sutton under GLA's 'Local Welcome Hong Kong Fund' (GLA FOI Release, 2022)

Item	Amount budgeted
Orientation seminars for Hong Kong BN(O)s: Delivery and preparation of seminars on life in the UK, covering topics such as transportation, <b>housing</b> , healthcare, work, school, and welfare rights	£5,400
Capacity Building: Hiring of outreach coordinator for intelligence gathering, coordinator to lead on social activities, and employment advisor to support with skills development.	£20,600
Miscellaneous costs: premises hiring costs, travelling expenses, material development, publicity, etc.	£4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

Table 7 – Expenditure breakdown of Tower Hamlets under GLA's 'Local Welcome Hong Kong Fund' (GLA FOI Release, 2022)

Item	Amount budgeted
English Language support	£96,800
Destitution claim	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£96,800</b>

Table 8 – Expenditure breakdown of Sutton under DLUHC's 'BNO Welcome Programme' (DLUHC FOI Release, 2022)

From the expenditures above, it is seen that although LBS and LBTH are both recipients of government-allocated BNO-specific funding, essentially none of the disbursed funding has been spent on housing-related issues. In fact, among the eight London boroughs which received

GLA funding<sup>9</sup>, LBTH was the only one to have tangentially included housing as part of its ‘orientation seminars’ for new immigrants. Even so, these so-called housing ‘orientation seminars’ focus only on the perspective of new immigrants, with no mention of how local authorities are planning and/or preparing for the housing market impacts of BNO immigrants.

This dissertation therefore argues that London LPAs play a very passive and reactive role in managing the housing impact of BNO immigrants. While there is indeed an emphasis on short-term housing issues such as homelessness due to destitution (which DLUHC itself (2021) says would be highly unlikely given BNO immigrants would be financially self-sufficient) and legal housing advice for renters, the fundamental issue, that is the excess housing demand brought by the influx of new arrivals, remains unaddressed.

Moreover, there also seems to be a lack of coordination between the different levels of government, leading to a ‘vacuum’ of planning which should have taken place. It is this dissertation’s view that there has been a lack of foresight and forward-planning. Granted, planning for housing is a very localised subject as argued by Liu and Takagi (2022), yet there is still much room for a top-down coordination from central government- or GLA-level to allow for a more strategic response to the impact of the inflow of BNO immigrants instead of solely focussing on short-term issues.

#### *The Planning for Housing mechanism*

As established in the Literature Review, the planning for housing mechanism in relation to Local Development Frameworks (i.e., ‘Local Plans’) often includes the use of SHMAs. Therefore, this section studies the methodologies of the SHMAs of LBS and LBTH respectively.

The LBS SHMA (2015) identified an annual OAN of 1,098 homes from 2013 to 2031, while the figure for the LBTH SHMA (2017) was 2,580 from 2016 to 2031. Both SHMAs used the then-DCLG household projection and ONS sub-national population projection figures as the ‘starting points’ for calculating their OANs.

When considering the impact in household numbers from international migration, migration trends of the 5/10-year period before the time of assessment were used. However, it was made

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<sup>9</sup> In alphabetical order: Barnet, Hackney, Haringey, Kingston-upon-Thames, Richmond-upon-Thames, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest (GLA FOI Release, 2022).



clear that the ONS sub-national figures ‘do not attempt to predict the impact of political circumstances’ such as Brexit, and by extension, the rollout of the BNO visa scheme studied in this dissertation. The LBTH SHMA (2017) also explicitly states that it does not take into account ‘short-term migration trends’.

*‘short-term migration trends are generally not appropriate for long-term planning (...) long-term migration trends are likely to provide a more reliable estimate of future households.’*

*– LBTH SHMA (2017) Para. 9*

Meanwhile, the LBS SHMA seemed to have placed its emphasis on migration patterns on internal migration instead, citing a more or less ‘consistent’ level of international net migration over the study period. In terms of the planning mechanism, given the 15-year timeframe of Local Plans, it would therefore be unlikely that housing policies as informed by SHMAs would have drastic changes.

In the reply to this dissertation’s request for comment, a representative from LBTH’s Planning Policy team also reiterated the stance that housing needs for ‘specific groups’ are generally not considered.

*‘Unfortunately, I’d say for the most part it lies outside of planning. We don’t set the priorities in terms of housing provision for specific groups and we generally work towards a housing target that is set through a high-level assessment of need across the borough – we don’t generally take account of specific groups that might be moving into the borough, it’s based more on a long-term projection of population growth’*

*– Representative from LBTH’s Planning Policy Team*

While this dissertation fully understands that international migration is a constantly evolving subject which gives rise to many uncertainties and statistical difficulties when making population projections, it remains a problem that the housing needs of potentially hundreds of thousands of BNO immigrants are unaccounted for. Unlike other international immigrants such as overseas students and migrant workers who will only live in the UK for a finite period of time, there is a general expectation that BNO immigrants will settle in the UK at least for the duration of the 5-year visa. This dissertation thus believes that this should not be simply seen

as another short-term immigration trend, but should instead be duly considered in future SHMAs.

Moreover, it is also not the intention of this dissertation to campaign for any preferential treatment for BNO immigrants in London in terms of housing policy planning. Rather, it calls for LPAs across London (as well as GLA and the central government by extension) to acquire a good understanding of the housing patterns and determinants of these Hongkongers, thereby allowing future planning policies to be more inclusive and responsive (for example, encouraging more housing supply around major local nodes, or planning for more social infrastructure like schools etc.).

### **RO5: The way forward**

Overall, the ‘planning problem’ highlighted by this dissertation revolves around accommodating to and managing the housing impacts of international immigrants in the UK, which is not only limited to those holding BNO visas. The same arguments could well be used for other immigrant groups. However, with the effectively laxer visa rules granted by the UK government, BNO immigrants will continue to emerge as a significant immigrant group in the foreseeable future. Thus, the housing impacts brought by this policy is potentially a significant planning issue with long-lasting socio-economic impact and deserves a concerted effort from government authorities on LPA, GLA and central government levels.

Therefore, this section proposes four policy recommendations specifically in relation to planning for housing for BNO Hongkongers living in London.

1. On a central government level, expenditure of BNO-specific government-allocated funding should be allowed to expand beyond short-term issues and focus on the mid- to long-term housing planning and supply mechanisms;
2. As the strategic plan-making body for Greater London, GLA should support the capacity building of London LPAs (in terms of funding, staffing etc.) to facilitate better forward planning of the housing impacts prior to the arrival of international immigrants;
3. Local councils should play a more proactive role in supporting the housing needs/demands of BNO immigrants – beginning with out-reaching work and establishing better local connections with existing Hong Kong diaspora communities, which allows for a better understanding of the local housing patterns and determinants

of these Hongkongers to be acquired and subsequently reflected in housing planning policies;

4. When opportune, LPAs should conduct timely reviews and updates of their prevailing SHMAs to reflect and highlight the influx and movement of BNO immigrants into the area, for example by the 5-year Local Plan review threshold as set out in the NPPF.

## **Research Limitations**

This section discusses the challenges and limitations faced by this dissertation throughout the course of the research.

First, in terms of sampling, although random sampling was used throughout the dissemination of the online questionnaire, meaning any eligible person (i.e., BNO immigrants living in Greater London) would be welcomed to complete the questionnaire, it was challenging to reach to the target respondents. It was only possible to start reaching out to personal contacts and connections, before contact with active members of different online community groups and platforms (such as Facebook community groups and Instagram pages catered to London BNO immigrants) could be made. As some of these community groups are location-specific (for example the ‘Sutton Hongkongers’ Facebook group), this could have led to somewhat skewed questionnaire responses being obtained – as seen in the overwhelming majority of respondents coming from Sutton. It was therefore challenging to establish whether it was due to sampling limitations, or there indeed is a huge Hong Kong diaspora community present in Sutton, or even a combination of both factors.

Second, whilst all of the research participants provided valuable insights towards their determinants of housing choice and first-hand experiences in interacting with the London housing market, whether their experiences are representative of the overall Hong Kong immigrant community is still unknown and would require further research beyond a MSc dissertation to be undertaken.

Moreover, as part of the research methodology, it was originally planned and hoped that a written comment/response could be obtained from both LBS and LBTH over their position and views on the potential housing impacts of the BNO visa scheme, as well as the wider planning for housing mechanism. However, efforts to contact the Council Leaders of both LBS and LBTH were in vain, whilst the Sutton Council Communications and Engagement Team replied that the relevant Local Plan staff-in-charge was unavailable over the summer, which limited the extent of analysis on the perspective of LPAs.

## **Conclusion**

Having explored the topic from the perspectives of Hong Kong immigrants, the London housing market, and LPAs respectively, this dissertation now moves to a concluding evaluation of the main RQ.

RO2 establishes that the property location is the most significant housing determinant considered by BNO immigrants, however other factors such as property price/rent level, local socio-economic statistics and school catchment areas etc. are also highly relevant to immigrant households with varying preferences. Meanwhile, targeted interviews in RO3 highlight that the local London housing market is somewhat incapable of accommodating to the housing demands of BNO immigrants both quantitatively and qualitatively. Upon a closer study of the Local Plans and SHMAs of LBS and LBTH, it is seen that the current planning for housing mechanism methodology does not readily allow for international immigration trends to be reflected on a local level, which results in lower-than-actual OAN figures.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that more could have been, and should be done in anticipating and understanding the housing needs of these hundreds of thousands of new BNO arrivals in London/the UK.

Overall, this dissertation aims to have established a preliminary evidence base and provided some empirical qualitative research into the growing Hong Kong diaspora community in London, whilst shedding light on the wider issue of planning for housing for international immigrants on a local level.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Structured Questionnaire Questions**

#### *Section 1 – Respondent Background Information*

1. Please select your gender
  - Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary
  - Prefer not to say
  
2. Please select your age group (in years)
  - 0-14
  - 15-17
  - 18-24
  - 25-29
  - 30-34
  - 35-39
  - 40-49
  - 50-54
  - 55-59
  - 60-64
  - 65+
  
3. When was your first arrival to London under the British Nationals (Overseas) ('BNO') Visa scheme?

#### *Section 2 – Current housing situation in London*

4. Which London borough are you currently living in?
  
5. Which type of housing tenure does your current accommodation belong to?
  - Owner Occupation - freehold property
  - Owner Occupation – leasehold property
  - Renting - private renting ('Assured Shorthold Tenancy')
  - Renting - subsidised housing (including affordable/social/intermediate housing)
  - Temporary Accommodation (e.g., hotels, AirBnBs, living with friends and/or relatives, short-term sublets etc.)

6. Which type of housing typology does your current accommodation belong to? Please input under 'Others' if it is not shown as an option below.
  - New purpose-built Flat (completed within the past two years)
  - Purpose-built Flat
  - Converted Terrace Flat
  - Ex-local authority housing
  - Terraced House
  - Semi-/Detached Property
  
7. For renters, what is the duration of your current lease?
  - Less than 1 month
  - Between 1-3 months
  - Between 3-<6 months
  - 6 months
  - Between 6-9 months
  - Between 9-<12 months
  - 1 year (12 months)
  - N/A (owner-occupied property)
  - Others
  
8. For renters, are you living in a flat-share/ 'Houses in Multiple Occupation' ('HMO') property?
  - Yes
  - No
  - N/A
  
9. What is the approximate total size of your accommodation?
  - <50 sqm
  - 50-69 sqm
  - 70-89 sqm
  - 90-109 sqm
  - >110 sqm
  
10. What is your household size? In other words, including yourself, how many people are there living in your accommodation?

*Section 3 – 'Determinants' and factors affecting housing choice*

11. From the list below, please rank the following 'determinants'/decision-driving factors in descending order of relative importance in influencing your housing choice in London.
  - Budget and/or Least Term
  - Property location
  - Housing typology
  - Neighbourhood
  - Others
  
12. Regarding Budget and/or Lease Term, please rank the following 'determinants'/decision-driving factors in descending order of relative importance in influencing your housing choice in London.
  - The property rent/price level
  - Flexibility of lease length
  - Choice of a break clause
  - Incurred Property Costs (e.g., Council Tax, Management Fees, Ground Rent etc.)
  - Others
  
13. Regarding property location, please rank the following 'determinants'/decision-driving factors in descending order of relative importance in influencing your housing choice in London.
  - Proximity to the local town centre (e.g., shops and services along the local high street)
  - Proximity to place of work and/or school
  - Proximity to central London (Zone 1)
  - Proximity and/or ease of access to public transport
  - Proximity to Hong Kong-style establishments (e.g., supermarkets, eateries, community infrastructure etc.)
  - Others
  
14. Regarding housing typology, please rank the following 'determinants'/decision-driving factors in descending order of relative importance in influencing your housing choice in London.
  - Property size
  - Preference for split-level houses ((semi-)/detached) over flats
  - Preference for flats over split-level houses ((semi-)/detached)
  - Preference for period properties over new-builds
  - Preference for new (sold/rented brand new or in well-maintained conditions) over period properties
  - Availability of garden space
  - Availability of carparking space
  - Others



15. Regarding the neighbourhood, please rank the following 'determinants'/decision-driving factors in descending order of relative importance in influencing your housing choice in London.

- School catchment area
- Preference for an area with a **more** diverse ethnic mix (in terms of white British vs BAME)
- Preference for an area with a **less** diverse ethnic mix (in terms of white British vs BAME)
- Preference for an area **with** an existing Hong Kong immigrant or wider Chinese community
- Preference for an area **without** an existing Hong Kong immigrant or wider Chinese community
- Local socio-economic statistics (e.g., Crime Rate, Index of Multiple Deprivation etc.)
- Others

*--- End of Questionnaire ---*

## Appendix B – Summary of interviews conducted

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Interview medium	Borough of residence	Current type of accommodation
A	15/8/2022	Online	Sutton	Owner-occupation – freehold property
B	17/8/2022	Online	Sutton	Owner-occupation – leasehold property
C	20/8/2022	Online	Sutton	Private renting – purpose-built flat
D	23/8/2022	Online	Tower Hamlets	Private renting – flat-share in an ex-local authority block
E	23/8/2022	Online	Tower Hamlets	Private renting – purpose-built flat

**Appendix C – Freedom of Information response from DLUHC (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022)**

**DLUHC Hong Kong Welcome Programme – FOI Request Reference: 19079113**

Hong Kong Welcome Programme: LA targeted funding for English Language and/or destitution - summary of claims in 2021/22 for the London region

Local Authority	Total English Language support paid by DLUHC*	Total destitution claim
London Borough of Harrow	£4,793	0
London Borough of Sutton	£96,800	0
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	£27,523	0
<b>Total claimed and paid</b>	<b>£129,116</b>	<b>£0</b>

\*All claims were paid in full

**Notes:**

- Funding to date covers support provided in 2021/22.
- Funding is retrospective and claimed on a quarterly basis following submission of a claim from local authorities.
- DLUHC reimburses local authorities for the cost of providing English language and/or destitution support to BN(O) status holders and their dependants.
- Claims for English language costs must be claimed for the quarter in which the course was completed.
- Destitution claims are made for the quarter in which the 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition has been lifted or the limit per BN(O) household has been reached.

**Appendix D – Freedom of Information response from GLA (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022)**

**GLA Local Welcome Hong Kong Fund Budget Spending (FOI Request reference: MGLA050722-4495)**

Barnet	
Activity	Amount budgeted
	(Awaiting completed project plan)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

Hackney	
Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Grant funding</b> to support local grassroots groups and Hong Kong-led organisations in Hackney	£20,000
<b>Support the introduction of BN(O)s to Hackney and Hackney Council:</b> organising, leading and delivering information sessions on the Council and its role, local education, and support offers	£400
<b>Informal language learning and community engagement</b> - supporting the interaction between Hongkongers and the wider community in Hackney through running informal English learning sessions	£4,000
<b>Delivery of community safety workshops</b> - support the delivery of trauma-informed training and capacity building for VCSE organisations	£1,200
<b>Delivery of information sessions aimed at BN(O) families</b> - information on education pathways and available childcare support	£800
<b>Mental Health Support</b> - Provision of mental health support	£2,000.00
<b>Organisation and hosting of an event</b> to welcome and celebrate Hackney Hongkongers	£1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£29,900</b>

### Haringey

Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Capacity building:</b> Hiring of part-time support worker to deliver project plan	£10,000
<b>Celebrating Hong Kong culture:</b> Organising and hosting events celebrating the Hong Kong Diaspora	£2,000
<b>Information sharing:</b> Translation and printing of Welcome Packs for the Hong Kong BN(O) community	£1,500
<b>Community engagement:</b> Hiring of interpretative services to support outreach with local Hong Kong community	£1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000</b>

### Kingston

Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Capacity building:</b> Hiring of a Hong Kong Project Coordinator and part-time activities assistant to deliver project plan	£20,280
<b>Community upskilling:</b> Delivery of weekly advice sessions for Hongkongers, engaging and collaborating with volunteers and supporting them to achieve formal advice qualifications	£7,800
<b>Admin fees:</b> Use of office space for community sessions, refreshments, visits to local community sights, translation of materials to Cantonese	£1,920
<b>Total</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

### Richmond

Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Welcome Guide:</b> development, design, and promotion of welcome to Richmond guide for Hong Kong BN(O)s.	£5,302
<b>School Workshops and curriculum materials:</b> development and delivery of workshops in targeted schools with the highest numbers of Hong Kong students, as well as support the production of books, audio and CD learning resources for primary and secondary schools.	£10,200

<b>Translation:</b> allocation of translation services to schools to be used for supporting and engaging Hongkonger parents who attend school workshops.	£3,840
<b>Total</b>	<b>£19,342</b>

Sutton	
Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Insights and outreach:</b> Hiring of staff to support expansion of insights and outreach work	£7,212
<b>Supporting parents away from Social Isolation and into work:</b> creation, design, and translation of local information packs, organising and delivering event at local children’s centre, updating council website, and leading on outreach during summer activities	£7,290
<b>Entrepreneurship and Employment:</b> commissioning and co-developing entrepreneurship sessions for Hong Kong BN(O)s, delivering and hosting a networking event	£14,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,502</b>

Tower Hamlets	
Activity	Amount budgeted
<b>Orientation seminars for Hong Kong BN(O)s:</b> Delivery and preparation of seminars on life in the UK, covering topics such as transportation, housing, healthcare, work, school, and welfare rights	£5,400
<b>Capacity Building:</b> Hiring of outreach coordinator for intelligence gathering, coordinator to lead on social activities, and employment advisor to support with skills development.	£20,600
<b>Miscellaneous costs:</b> premises hiring costs, travelling expenses, material development, publicity, etc.	£4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

**Waltham Forest**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Amount budgeted</b>
<b>Capacity building:</b> hiring of part-time coordinator to conduct data analysis and mapping activity of BN(O)s in Waltham Forest. The coordinator will lead on targeted outreach with the community and support in the delivery of this programme.	£12,187
<b>Admin costs:</b> translation of info packs and welcome guides, printing of materials, and hiring of venues	£2,300
<b>English language support:</b> financial support for learners to complete qualifications in the English language	£6,325
<b>Total</b>	<b>£20,812</b>

## **Appendix E – Information and Consent form (Sample)**

### **Information and consent form (Sample)**

**Project Title** The emerging Hong Kong diaspora in London: Understanding the early-stage interactions between Hong Kong immigrants under the British Nationals (Overseas) Visa scheme and the London housing market.

**Researcher** Chun Ho Christopher Wong

#### **Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a research project being undertaken by a Masters student from the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London (UCL).

Before you decide whether or not to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what participation will involve. Please read the following information carefully, feel free to discuss it with others if you wish, or ask the research team for clarification or further information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

#### **Why is this research being conducted?**

The aim of this project is to understand the interactions between new Hong Kong immigrants in London under the BNO Visa scheme and the London housing market, specifically their housing determinants and the local planning for housing mechanism.

#### **Why am I being invited to take part?**

You are being invited to take part due as you are a Hong Kong immigrant currently living in Greater London under the BNO Visa scheme.

#### **Do I have to participate?**

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw from the research at any time with no consequences and without having to give a reason.

#### **What will happen if I choose to take part?**



If you do choose to participate, you will be invited to face-to-face interview explore the issues highlighted above. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed location. The interview will last approximately 10 to 20 minutes and will be audio recorded (and transcribed at a later date). You will have the opportunity to see the interview transcript and agree any amendments with the researcher after the interview is concluded. Travel and subsistence expenses are not offered for participation.

**What are the advantages of taking part?**

There are no immediate benefits for participating in this project and no financial incentive or reward is offered, however it is hoped that this project will inform a better understanding of the housing needs and demands of Hong Kong immigrant communities within Greater London as well as a reflection on how the London housing market is accommodating to such needs.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

We anticipate no significant disadvantages associated with taking part in this project. If you experience any unexpected adverse consequences as a result of taking part in the project you are encouraged to contact the researcher as soon as possible using the contact details on page 2 of this information and consent sheet.

**If I choose to take part, what will happen to the data?**

The interview data will be anonymised at the point of transcription and identified by a general identifier (e.g. 'Planning officer A' or 'Planning consultant B' or a suitable pseudonym). A record of participant identities and any notes will be kept separately and securely from the anonymised data. All data and information affiliated with this project will be securely stored on an encrypted computer drive and physical documents will be stored securely on University property.

The data will be only used for the purposes of this research and relevant outputs and will not be shared with any third party. The anonymised data may be utilised in the written dissertation produced at the end of this project, and this dissertation may then be made publicly available via the University Library's Open Access Portal, however no identifiable or commercial sensitive information will be accessible in this way.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

It is anticipated that the data collected in this project will be included in the dissertation produced at the end of this project, submitted for the award of a Masters degree at University College London (UCL). You will not be personally identified in any of the outputs from this work, and attributions and quotations will be

anonymised. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of any outputs stemming from this project please ask the contact below who will be happy to provide this.

**Contact Details**

If you would like more information or have any questions or concerns about the project or your participation please use the contact details below:

**Primary contact** Chun Ho Christopher Wong  
**Role** MSc student  
**Email** christopher.wong.18@ucl.ac.uk

**Supervisor** Bianca-Maria Nardella  
**Role** MSc dissertation supervisor  
**Email** bm.nardella@ucl.ac.uk  
**Telephone** N/A

**Concerns and / or Complaints**

If you have concerns about any aspect of this research project please contact the MSc student contact the student in the first instance, then escalate to the supervisor.

## Informed Consent Sheet (Sample)

*The emerging Hong Kong diaspora in London: Understanding the early-stage interactions between Hong Kong immigrants under the British Nationals (Overseas) Visa scheme and the London housing market.*

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form by ticking the boxes to acknowledge the following statements and signing your name at the bottom of the page.

Please give the signed form to the researcher conducting your interview at the interview. They will also be able to explain this consent form further with you, if required.

1.	I have read and understood the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I agree to participate in the above research by attending a face-to-face interview as described on the Information Sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand that I may withdraw at any time without giving a reason and with no consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I agree for the interview to be audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I understand that I may see a copy of the interview transcript after it has been transcribed and agree any amendments with the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I understand that the intention is that interviews are anonymised and that if any of my words are used in a research output that they will not be directly attributed to me unless otherwise agreed by all parties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand the data from this project will be considered for repository in the UCL Open Access repository as described on the Information Sheet but that this will be anonymised data only.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I understand that I can contact the student who interviewed me at any time using the email address they contacted me on to arrange the interview, or the dissertation supervisor using the contact details provided on page X of the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Participant name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Researcher name:** Chun Ho Christopher Wong

**Signature:** *Christopher WONG*

**Date:**

**Appendix F – UCL Risk Assessment Form**

**RISK ASSESSMENT FORM  
FIELD / LOCATION WORK**



**DEPARTMENT/SECTION:** BARTLETT SCHOOL OF PLANNING

**LOCATION(S):** LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

**PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT:** CHUN HO CHRISTOPHER WONG

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK (including geographic location):** In-person or virtual interviews to be conducted in London

**COVID-19 RELATED GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT STATEMENT:**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets fall on people in the vicinity and can be directly inhaled or picked up on the hands and transferred when someone touches their face. This risk assessment documents key risks associated fieldwork during a pandemic, but it is not exhaustive and will not be able to cover all known risks, globally. This assessment outlines principles adopted by UCL at an institutional level and it is necessarily general. Please use the open text box 'Other' to indicate any contingent risk factors and control measures you might encounter during the course of your dissertation research and writing.

Please refer to the Dissertation in Planning Guidance Document (available on Moodle) to help you complete this form.

**Hazard 1: Risk of Covid -19 infection during research related travel and research related interactions with others (when face-to-face is possible and/or unavoidable)**

**Risk Level - Medium /Moderate**

**Existing Advisable Control Measures:** Do not travel if you are unwell, particularly if you have COVID-19 symptoms. Self-isolate in line with NHS (or country-specific) guidance.

Avoid travelling and face-to-face interactions; if you need to travel and meet with others:

- If possible, avoid using public transport and cycle or walk instead.
- If you need to use public transport travel in off-peak times and follow transport provider's and governmental guidelines.
- Maintain (2 metre) social distancing where possible and where 2 metre social distancing is not achievable, wear face covering.
- Wear face covering at all times in enclosed or indoor spaces.

- Use hand sanitiser prior to and after journey.
  - Avoid consuming food or drinks, if possible, during journey.
  - Avoid, if possible, interchanges when travelling - choose direct route.
  - Face away from other persons. If you have to face a person ensure that the duration is as short as possible.
  - Do not share any items i.e. stationary, tablets, laptops etc. If items need to be shared use disinfectant wipes to disinfect items prior to and after sharing.
  - If meeting in a group for research purposes ensure you are following current country specific guidance on face-to-face meetings (i.e rule of 6 etc.)
  - If and when possible meet outside and when not possible meet in venues with good ventilation (e.g. open a window)
  - If you feel unwell during or after a meeting with others, inform others you have interacted with, self-isolate and get tested for Covid-19
  - Avoid high noise areas as this mean the need to shout which increases risk of aerosol transmission of the virus.
  - Follow one way circulation systems, if in place. Make sure to check before you visit a building.
  - Always read and follow the visitors policy for the organisation you will be visiting.
  - Flush toilets with toilet lid closed.
- 'Other' Control Measures you will take (specify):

**NOTE: The hazards and existing control measures above pertain to Covid-19 infection risks only. More generalised health and safety risk may exist due to remote field work activities and these are outlined in your Dissertation in Planning Guidance document. Please consider these as possible 'risk' factors in completing the remainder of this standard form. For more information also see: [Guidance Framework for Fieldwork in Taught and MRes Programmes, 2021-22](#)**

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.

If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.

**Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.**

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

*e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.*

**The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard**

Examples of risk: adverse weather, illness, hypothermia, assault, getting lost.

Is the risk high / medium / low ?

*I will be conducting my research and face-to-face interviews in London. The research poses **LOW** additional environmental risks as I am fairly familiar with the city.*

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice
- only accredited centres are used for rural field work
- ✓ participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
- refuge is available
- work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place
- ✓ OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: **all face-to-face interviews will be conducted in public places where I am familiar with (e.g. near UCL campus, or at local coffee shops) to minimise dangers of lone working (see below).**

**EMERGENCIES****Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks***e.g. fire, accidents*

Examples of risk: loss of property, loss of life  
**Accidents (e.g., personal injuries or robberies) may happen whilst conducting face-to-face interviews in public places. However, such a risk is LOW and unlikely.**

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- participants have registered with LOCATE at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/>
- ✓ contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
- ✓ participants have means of contacting emergency services
- a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
- the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
- ✓ OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: **I will exercise caution and ensure my belongings (e.g., mobile phone, laptops etc.) are well-kept whilst I am out.**

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**EQUIPMENT****Is equipment used?****NO****If 'No' move to next hazard  
If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks***e.g. clothing, outboard motors.*

Examples of risk: inappropriate, failure, insufficient training to use or repair, injury. Is the risk high / medium / low ?

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed
- participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work
- all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person
- all users have been advised of correct use
- special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**LONE WORKING****Is lone working a possibility?****YES****If 'No' move to next hazard****If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks***e.g. alone or in isolation lone interviews.*

Examples of risk: difficult to summon help. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**There is a potential safety risk of lone working as I will be conducting all interviews without accompaniment. However, the associated risk is expected to be **LOW**.**

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
- lone or isolated working is not allowed
- location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
- all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle
- all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: **all face-to-face interviews will be conducted in public places (e.g. near UCL campus, or at local coffee shops) to minimise dangers of lone working.**

**ILL HEALTH**

The possibility of ill health always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this Hazard.

*e.g. accident, illness, personal attack, special personal considerations or vulnerabilities.*

Examples of risk: injury, asthma, allergies. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**LOW.** I do not have any known personal health conditions which require special considerations. I will follow relevant government guidance on COVID risks and wear face masks during interviews if adequate social distancing is not possible.

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

all participants have had the necessary inoculations/ carry appropriate prophylactics

participants have been advised of the physical demands of the research and are deemed to be physically suited

participants have been adequate advice on harmful plants, animals and substances they may encounter

participants who require medication should carry sufficient medication for their needs

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: **I will carry with myself several plaster/bandages whilst out for interviews in case of any sudden accidents.**

**TRANSPORT**

Will transport be required

NO

YES

Move to next hazard

Use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. hired vehicles*

Examples of risk: accidents arising from lack of maintenance, suitability or training

Is the risk high / medium / low?

**LOW.** Transport will be used to get to various interview locations. Minimal safety risk is expected.

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

only public transport will be used

the vehicle will be hired from a reputable supplier

transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant national regulations

drivers comply with UCL Policy on Drivers

[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college\\_drivers.php](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php)

drivers have been trained and hold the appropriate licence

there will be more than one driver to prevent driver/operator fatigue, and there will be adequate rest periods

sufficient spare parts carried to meet foreseeable emergencies





OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: I will schedule my interviews to the best of my ability (and the availability of the interviewees such that rush hour crowds can be avoided)

**DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC**

Will people be dealing with public

**YES**

If 'No' move to next hazard

If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. interviews, observing*

Examples of risk: personal attack, causing offence, being misinterpreted. Is the risk high / medium / low?

I will be conducting interviews with members of the public. There is a risk of interviewees being offended by interview questions that are possibly offensive, too personal or involve sensitive information. However, such a risk is **LOW** as interviewees will have had knowledge of my dissertation and the interview questions, and I will have obtained their consent before the interview commences.

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

all participants are trained in interviewing techniques



advice and support from local groups has been sought

participants do not wear clothes that might cause offence or attract unwanted attention

interviews are conducted at neutral locations or where neither party could be at risk



OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

- (1) an outline of interview questions will be sent to the interviewees prior to the interview; consent from the interviewees will be obtained before the interview begins.
- (2) interviews, if conducted face-to-face, will take place in public places to minimise danger of lone-working (see above).

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**WORKING ON OR NEAR WATER**

Will people work on or near water?

**NO**

If 'No' move to next hazard

If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. rivers, marshland, sea.*

Examples of risk: drowning, malaria, hepatitis A, parasites. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- lone working on or near water will not be allowed
- coastguard information is understood; all work takes place outside those times when tides could prove a threat
- all participants are competent swimmers
- participants always wear adequate protective equipment, e.g. buoyancy aids, wellingtons
- boat is operated by a competent person
- all boats are equipped with an alternative means of propulsion e.g. oars
- participants have received any appropriate inoculations
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**MANUAL HANDLING (MH)****Do MH activities take place?****NO****If 'No' move to next hazard****If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**

*e.g. lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy equipment, physical unsuitability for the task.*

Examples of risk: strain, cuts, broken bones. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**CONTROL MEASURES****Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- the departmental written Arrangement for MH is followed
- the supervisor has attended a MH risk assessment course
- all tasks are within reasonable limits, persons physically unsuited to the MH task are prohibited from such activities
- all persons performing MH tasks are adequately trained
- equipment components will be assembled on site
- any MH task outside the competence of staff will be done by contractors
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**SUBSTANCES**

Will participants work with

**NO**

If 'No' move to next hazard  
 If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

substances

*e.g. plants, chemical, biohazard, waste*

Examples of risk: ill health - poisoning, infection, illness, burns, cuts. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- the departmental written Arrangements for dealing with hazardous substances and waste are followed
- all participants are given information, training and protective equipment for hazardous substances they may encounter
- participants who have allergies have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
- waste is disposed of in a responsible manner
- suitable containers are provided for hazardous waste
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**OTHER HAZARDS**

Have you identified any other hazards?

**NO**

If 'No' move to next section  
 If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*i.e. any other hazards must be noted and assessed here.*

Hazard:

Risk: is the risk

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Give details of control measures in place to control the identified risks

Have you identified any risks that are not adequately controlled?

**NO**

✓

Move to Declaration

**YES****S**

Use space below to identify the risk and what action was taken

**DECLARATION**

The work will be reassessed whenever there is a significant change and at least annually. Those participating in the work have read the assessment.

Select the appropriate statement:

I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that there is no significant residual

Risk

I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above

NAME OF SUPERVISOR

**Bianca-Maria Nadella**

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## Appendix G – Ethical Clearance Pro Forma

### Ethical Clearance Pro Forma

It is important for you to include all relevant information about your research in this form, so that your supervisor can give you the best advice on how to proceed with your research.

You are advised to read though the relevant sections of [UCL's Research Integrity guidance](#) to learn more about your ethical obligations.

#### Submission Details

**1. Name of programme of study:**

MSc Housing and City Planning

**2. Please indicate the type of research work you are doing (Delete that which do not apply):**

Dissertation in Planning (MSc)

**3. Please provide the current working title of your research:**

The emerging Hong Kong diaspora in London: Understanding the early-stage interactions between Hong Kong immigrants under the British Nationals (Overseas) Visa scheme and the London housing market

**4. Please indicate your supervisor's name:**

Bianca-Maria Nardella

#### Research Details

**5. Please indicate here which data collection methods you expect to use. (Tick all that apply/or delete those which do not apply.)**

- Interviews
- Questionnaires (including oral questions)
- Secondary data analysis

**6. Please indicate where your research will take place (delete that which does not apply):**

- UK only

**7. Does your project involve the recruitment of participants?**

'Participants' means human participants and their data (including sensor/locational data and observational notes/images.)

Yes

**Appropriate Safeguard, Data Storage and Security**

**8. Will your research involve the collection and/or use of personal data?**

Personal data is data which relates to a living individual who can be identified from that data or from the data and other information that is either currently held, or will be held by the data controller (you, as the researcher).

This includes:

- Any expression of opinion about the individual and any intentions of the data controller or any other person toward the individual.
- Sensor, location or visual data which may reveal information that enables the identification of a face, address etc. (some post codes cover only one property).
- Combinations of data which may reveal identifiable data, such as names, email/postal addresses, date of birth, ethnicity, descriptions of health diagnosis or conditions, computer IP address (of relating to a device with a single user).

No

**9. Is your research using or collecting:**

- special category data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation\*, and/or
- data which might be considered sensitive in some countries, cultures or contexts?

\*Examples of special category data are data:

- which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership;
- concerning health (the physical or mental health of a person, including the provision of health care services);
- concerning sex life or sexual orientation;
- genetic or biometric data processed to uniquely identify a natural person.

No

**10. Do you confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018)?  
(Choose one only, delete that which does not apply)**

- I will not be working with any personal data.

**11. I confirm that:**

- The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- I will continue to reflect on and update these ethical considerations in consultation with my supervisor.

Yes

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

**/100**

**Instructor**

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