



Immigration, Accommodation and Belonging in Forest Gate/Newham: A Secondary Data Study of Housing Pressure, Migrant Settlement and Community Integration

Muwanguzi Kironde¹, Dr. David Musooli², Aguta Richard Drabe³, Dr. Job Matovu⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Africa Renewal University

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 29 September 2026	This research analyses the influence of immigration status, housing demands, and availability of local assistance on the accommodation experiences and sense of belonging within migrant communities in Forest Gate and the broader London Borough of Newham. Employing a secondary data and documentary research methodology, the investigation utilises Census 2021 data, Home Office immigration statistics, Newham housing and sanctuary policy documents, London-wide asylum welcome guidelines, and scholarly literature concerning refugee integration, housing instability, community cohesion, and historical migration. The article contends that the experiences of migrant housing cannot be comprehended just through the lens of housing availability. Their formation is influenced by the interplay of legal standing, housing ownership, population density, economic feasibility, linguistic accessibility, understanding of rights, navigation of local services, and social ties. Newham serves as a notable example due to its status as one of England's most heterogeneous and densely inhabited boroughs, characterised by considerable private rental activity, elevated housing demand, and proactive policy initiatives aimed at sanctuary, equality, and social cohesion (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2023; London Borough of Newham, 2024a). The research highlights a discrepancy between established regulatory structures and the actual requirements of migrant inhabitants who concurrently manage housing, immigration, welfare, health, and community services. It suggests an economical Forest Gate Housing and Belonging Navigator Program, implemented via trained community volunteers, local organisations, and referral collaborations. The article also extracts prudent historical insights from early mediaeval migration and settlement, contending that accommodation necessitates more than just physical relocation; it demands mediation, regulations, legitimacy, reliable intermediates, and avenues for local integration. A supplementary historical analysis focuses specifically on the contested migration into post-Roman Britain, including invitation narratives, settlement, conflict, population mixing and cultural change, to consider how host responses and migrant identities may evolve into long-term belonging, while rejecting any direct equivalence between early medieval and contemporary migration.
Corresponding Author: Muwanguzi Kironde	
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I. INTRODUCTION

Migration and accommodation are among the paramount socioeconomic issues confronting modern metropolitan societies. For migrant inhabitants, housing transcends the mere provision of shelter. It serves as the foundation for individuals to engage with educational institutions, healthcare services, job opportunities, community resources, neighbourhood relationships, faith communities, and societal involvement. When housing is unstable, congested, too

expensive, or challenging to access, the experience of belonging becomes fragile. This is especially significant in Forest Gate and the broader London Boro of Newham, where enduring diversity, high population density, housing pressure, and migration histories meet.

Newham serves as an important context for this research due to its demographic heterogeneity and considerable housing challenges. The 2021 Census indicated that Newham's population was roughly 351,000, reflecting a

14.0% rise since 2011, making it one of the most densely populated boros in England (ONS, 2023). The borough possesses a significant percentage of inhabitants born outside England and a substantial demographic identifying as Asian, Black, mixed, and other ethnicities (ONS, 2023). These attributes render Newham a place where matters of migration, housing, integration, and belonging are tangible realities rather than just policy discussions.

This article tackles the issue that recent migrants and residents with refugee backgrounds in Forest Gate/Newham frequently find it challenging to obtain reliable, comprehensible, and cohesive information regarding housing alternatives, tenant rights, local assistance, and community integration. This issue is pragmatic, societal, and institutional. It influences residents' awareness of their rights, comprehension of council procedures, ability to contest inadequate housing circumstances, capacity to transition from asylum or temporary housing to permanent residences, and their confidence in engaging in community activities.

The main research question guiding this article is: How do immigration status, housing pressure and access to local support shape accommodation experiences and belonging among migrant communities in Forest Gate/Newham? The study further asks what secondary data reveal about migration, housing tenure, overcrowding and accommodation pressure in Newham; how Newham's housing, sanctuary and community cohesion policies respond to migrant accommodation needs; what practical gaps exist between formal services and lived needs in Forest Gate; what low-cost community solution could improve housing navigation and belonging; and how historical lessons from early medieval migration, settlement and accommodation responses may inform contemporary local practice. A sixth sub-question asks: How can the contested history of early medieval migration into post-Roman Britain, including invitation, settlement, intermarriage, conflict and cultural change, inform contemporary understanding of host-community responses, migrant identity formation and long-term belonging in Forest Gate/Newham?

The central argument is that accommodation should be perceived as a relational and institutional process, rather than simply the provision of housing units. Migrant inhabitants require more than just official services. They require readily available information, linguistic assistance, awareness of their rights, reliable community intermediaries, secure referral pathways, and spaces where housing guidance is linked to belonging. A local navigator model is thus suggested as a practical and economical solution.

II. BACKGROUND

The demographic profile of Newham serves as the foundation for this research. The 2021 Census indicates that merely 45.5% of Newham inhabitants identified England as their birthplace, with nations like Bangladesh, India,

Romania, and Pakistan significantly represented among non-UK birthplaces (ONS, 2023). The borough also possesses a significant Asian and Black demographic, affirming its status as one of the most heterogeneous metropolitan locales in England (ONS, 2023). This diversity is one of Newham's strengths; nevertheless, it simultaneously engenders intricate service requirements due to variations among residents in language, legal status, housing awareness, cultural expectations, and understanding of UK systems.

Housing tenure is central to the issue of accommodation. In 2021, the predominant housing tenure in Newham was private renting, followed by social renting and home ownership (ONS, 2023). This is significant as migrant families, particularly those who have recently immigrated, tend to depend more on privately rented accommodation. The Migration Observatory indicates that individuals born outside the UK are more inclined than their UK-born counterparts to reside in the private rented sector, and households with at least one foreign-born adult are more prone to experience overcrowding (Fernández-Reino et al., 2024).

The housing pressure in Newham is not solely a concern for migrants. It constitutes a broader structural issue across the borough. Newham's housing policy acknowledges the necessity to deliver more and better homes, enhance housing standards, support residents, regulate the private rental market, and tackle homelessness (London Borough of Newham, 2021a). The borough's approach to homelessness also positions housing as a cornerstone for safety, family life, communal roots, and overall wellbeing (London Borough of Newham, 2021b).

For individuals with migrant and refugee backgrounds, these housing challenges are influenced by their immigration status. Certain inhabitants might encounter obstacles associated with No Recourse to Public Funds, insufficient documentation, lack of knowledge of tenancy legislation, fear of enforcement, linguistic challenges, or difficulties in obtaining regulated counsel. Individuals granted refugee status may encounter immediate transitional challenges when compelled to vacate asylum housing and get new accommodation within a limited timeframe (London Borough of Newham, n.d.-a). The Home Office disseminates immigration and asylum support statistics at the local authority level, which are valuable for comprehending how national immigration systems appear at the borough level (Home Office, 2026).

Simultaneously, Newham possesses significant policy strength. Its Borough of Sanctuary Strategy commits the council and its partners to foster an environment of hospitality for refugees, asylum seekers, and others seeking sanctuary (London Borough of Newham, 2024a). Its Equality and Cohesion Plan underscores equity, inclusivity, and interpersonal connections among individuals from diverse backgrounds (London Borough of Newham,

n.d.-b). These policies provide a foundation for supporting migrant residents; nonetheless, the primary challenge lies in translating policy into reliable, community-based assistance.

III. STUDY OBJECTIVES

A. Main Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how immigration status, housing pressure and access to local support shape accommodation experiences and belonging among migrant communities in Forest Gate and the wider London Borough of Newham.

B. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

1. Analyse secondary data on migration, housing tenure, overcrowding and accommodation pressure in Newham
2. Examine how Newham’s housing, sanctuary and community cohesion policies respond to migrant accommodation needs
3. Identify practical gaps between formal services and the lived needs of migrant residents in Forest Gate
4. Propose a low-cost community solution that can improve housing navigation and belonging;
5. Draw careful historical lessons from early medieval migration and settlement responses that may inform contemporary approaches to accommodation, mediation and community integration.
6. Examine how the contested history of early medieval migration into post-Roman Britain—including invitation, settlement, intermarriage, conflict and cultural change—may inform contemporary understanding of host-community responses, migrant identity formation and long-term belonging in Forest Gate/Newham.

IV. RELATED WORKS

This research is informed by existing literature on refugee integration, migrant accommodation, housing precarity, community cohesion, and historical movement patterns. Ager and Strang’s conceptual framework remain influential because it presents integration as multidimensional. Their framework identifies domains such as housing, employment, education and health, as well as social connections, rights, language, safety and cultural knowledge (Ager & Strang, 2008). This is significant as it demonstrates that housing is intertwined with integration. Housing serves as a fundamental basis for facilitating integration.

Phillimore (2021) broadens this discourse by redirecting focus from migrants exclusively to the receiving context. Her framework of refugee-integration-opportunity structures posits that integration is influenced by local circumstances, institutions, relationships, narratives, services, and support

systems. This approach is especially pertinent to Forest Gate/Newham as the sense of belonging among migrants is shaped not solely by personal endeavours, but also by council services, housing dynamics, faith institutions, educational institutions, libraries, charitable entities, and local political narratives.

The literature on housing precarity further substantiates this study. Migrant households could encounter instability due to overcrowding, elevated rents, substandard housing conditions, short tenancies, insecure employment, little awareness of rights, and limited access to guidance. The Migration Observatory reports that migrant families are more prone to reside in the private rented sector and are more susceptible to overcrowded living conditions compared to UK-born households (Fernández-Reino et al., 2024). These trends are particularly significant in London, where property expenses and population density exacerbate accommodation pressure.

Local policy literature additionally emphasises the connection between housing and a sense of belonging. Newham’s Housing Delivery Strategy acknowledges that housing is fundamental to quality of life and that the borough must tackle issues of affordability, safety, supply, and homelessness prevention (London Borough of Newham, 2021a). The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy emphasises the need of prevention, collaborative efforts, and the necessity to reduce dangerous or unstable forms of accommodation (London Borough of Newham, 2021b). These strategies indicate that housing pressure is acknowledged at an institutional level, however they also prompt enquiries regarding residents’ ability to access and manoeuvre through available assistance.

The literature on sanctuary and cohesion introduces an additional dimension. The Asylum Welcome Toolkit from the Greater London Authority encourages local authorities to formulate cohesive, strategic, and pragmatic approaches to incoming asylum seekers, encompassing interdepartmental collaboration, outreach, safeguarding, and integration (Greater London Authority, 2024). Newham’s Borough of Sanctuary initiative similarly emphasises hospitality and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary (London Borough of Newham, 2024a). Nonetheless, policy commitments to hospitality must be operationalised via readily available information, reliable community networks, and safe referral pathways.

This research additionally relies on historical studies of early mediaeval migration and accommodation. Goffart (1980) examined the late Roman and early mediaeval systems for accommodating arriving populations, contending that these systems encompassed organised fiscal and legal frameworks instead of just unregulated settlement. Halsall (2007) similarly demonstrates that migration and settlement during the late Roman and early mediaeval

periods in the West entailed complex negotiations of power, identity, settlement and local engagement.

More specifically, the sixth sub-question requires attention to the contested history of migration into post-Roman Britain. The familiar narrative, derived especially from Gildas and later retellings, presents British authorities as inviting Saxon fighting groups to assist with defence, followed by a breakdown in relations and violent conflict. That account cannot be treated as a neutral administrative record: Gildas wrote a moral and rhetorical work, and later origin narratives organised a complex process into more coherent episodes and peoples. Modern scholarship therefore treats the 'invitation' tradition as evidence for one remembered or narrated mode of initial reception, rather than as a complete factual template for all subsequent migration and settlement (Hills, 2003; Flierman & Welton, 2021).

Archaeological and archaeogenetic evidence has further complicated older arguments framed as either a small elite takeover or near-total population replacement. Härke (2011) argues that early English ethnogenesis involved both continental immigration and interaction within Britain. More recent ancient-DNA evidence demonstrates substantial migration from the continental North Sea region while also showing marked regional and within-site heterogeneity, including individuals of mixed ancestry (Gretzinger et al., 2022). Such admixture is consistent with family formation across migrant-descended and local groups over generations, but genetic evidence alone cannot establish that every mixed-ancestry relationship took the social or legal form of intermarriage.

This scholarship also cautions against treating migrant identity as a fixed cultural package imported intact from the continent. Burial practice, material culture, language, religion, political allegiance and group labels changed over time, and identities that later appeared 'English' emerged through processes of interaction and ethnogenesis within Britain (Hills, 2003; Härke, 2011). For the present study, the useful comparison is therefore not that Forest Gate resembles fifth- or sixth-century Britain. Rather, it is that host institutions, public narratives, resource pressures, family ties, social participation and the passage of generations can transform both the reception of newcomers and the identities through which belonging is understood.

The historical comparison must be treated carefully. The legal, political, and social environments of early mediaeval Europe and modern London are profoundly dissimilar. The objective is not to replicate mediaeval practices. The historical insight is analytical: accommodation under conditions of movement and pressure requires rules, mediation, legitimacy, trusted intermediaries and negotiated belonging. In Forest Gate/Newham, this translates into the need for clear housing information, rights

awareness, community linkages, and cohesive local assistance.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a secondary data and documentary research design. It does not depend on primary interviews, surveys, or participant observation. It analyses quantitative statistics, policy documents, and scholarly literature to investigate the correlation between immigration, accommodation pressure, and belonging in Forest Gate/Newham.

The research employs four primary classifications of data. The initial category encompasses demographic and housing information, particularly the Census 2021 data from the Office for National Statistics. This information offers insights on population growth, country of origin, ethnic diversity, housing tenure, and population density (ONS, 2023). The subsequent category pertains to immigration and asylum statistics, namely the Home Office's datasets on immigration and asylum support at the local authority level (Home Office, 2026). The third category encompasses local and London policy documents, such as Newham's Housing Delivery Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Borough of Sanctuary Strategy, materials related to private rented sector licensing, the Equality and Cohesion Plan, and pertinent London asylum welcome guidelines (Greater London Authority, 2024; London Borough of Newham, 2021a, 2021b, 2024a). The fourth category encompasses scholarly literature on integration, housing precarity, migration, and historical settlement.

The analysis combines descriptive quantitative review with qualitative documentary analysis. A descriptive review is employed to interpret Newham's demographic and housing profile. Documentary analysis is used to investigate the manner in which policy documents frame migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, housing vulnerability, homelessness, private renting, sanctuary, social cohesiveness, and belonging. Thematic codes include overcrowding, private renting, affordability, asylum support, refugee move-on, No Recourse to Public Funds, language access, tenant rights, community welcome, housing advice, social connection, service fragmentation and trusted navigation.

For the sixth sub-question, the historical material is treated as a contested secondary evidence base rather than as a direct precedent for contemporary policy. The analysis compares narrative historiography, archaeological interpretation and archaeogenetic evidence across the themes of invitation and reception, settlement, host-newcomer negotiation, conflict, intermarriage or population admixture, cultural change, identity formation and intergenerational belonging. Where historical sources disagree, the disagreement is retained as part of the finding rather than forced into a single migration narrative.

Analogical inference is restricted to broad social processes and questions; it does not assume equivalence between early medieval political conditions and the legal, democratic and human-rights framework of contemporary Newham.

The methodological approach is informed by Kothari's perspective on research methodology as a systematic approach for addressing a research problem via established protocols for data collection and analysis (Kothari, 2004). It is also informed by Creswell's emphasis on alignment between research questions, methods and interpretation (Creswell, 2003). A secondary data design is suitable as the research seeks to pinpoint a tangible issue, interpret existing evidence, and suggest a viable local intervention rather than measure individual-level outcomes.

The research considers Forest Gate as a locality within the broader borough system of Newham. This is significant as a considerable amount of publicly accessible data is categorised at the borough level instead of being particular to neighbourhoods, yet the sensations of belonging are frequently rooted in neighbourhoods. Consequently, statistics at the Newham level are utilised to illustrate structural circumstances, whereas Forest Gate is treated as the proposed setting for practical intervention.

The ethical risk is minimised due to the utilisation of public and secondary sources in the study. However, ethical sensitivity remains necessary. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should not be represented as a burden or threat. The focus of this study is on structural pressures, policy gaps and support needs. The suggested initiative aims to enhance dignity, awareness of rights, accessibility to services, and a sense of communal belonging.

VI. KEY FINDINGS / RESULTS

A. Newham's Diversity Is a Strength, but It Creates Complex Service Needs

The first finding is that Newham's diversity is one of its defining strengths, but it also creates complex service needs. The 2021 Census indicates that Newham possesses a substantial population with migrant backgrounds, alongside significant ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity (ONS, 2023). This means that housing and community services must communicate across different languages, legal statuses, cultural expectations and levels of familiarity with UK systems.

Diversity by itself does not create social issues. In situations of housing pressure, diversity may become a politically charged issue if inhabitants view accommodation, welfare, educational opportunities, or services as scarce. Newham's Equality and Cohesion Plan acknowledges the significance of fostering trust, equity, and a sense of collective belonging among individuals from diverse origins (London Borough of Newham, n.d.-b). The pragmatic consequence is that accommodation policy should be linked to social cohesion. A resident could possess

accommodation yet still experience exclusion if they struggle to comprehend services, communicate with institutions, or establish community connections.

B. Housing Pressure is a Structural Condition in Newham

The second finding is that housing pressure is structural rather than coincidental. The expansion of Newham's populace, its density, and housing tenure profile exert considerable strain on local accommodation. The borough's significant prevalence of private rentals is important due to the flexibility they offer, although they can also be precarious, costly, and inconsistent in quality. The 2021 Census verifies that private renting is a significant tenure category in Newham (ONS, 2023). The Migration Observatory further shows that individuals born outside the UK are more inclined to reside in privately leased accommodations compared to those born in the UK (Fernández-Reino et al., 2024).

Newham's Housing Delivery Strategy responds to this context by emphasising more and better homes, resident-centred housing, improved safety in the private rented sector and action on homelessness (London Borough of Newham, 2021a). The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy equally emphasises prevention, the minimisation of temporary housing, and collaborative efforts (London Borough of Newham, 2021b). These measures indicate that Newham acknowledges housing as a significant municipal concern, although they also reveal the magnitude of the challenge.

C. Immigration Status Influences Housing Options

The third discovery is that immigrant status significantly influences housing options. Migrant residents do not enter the housing system from the same position. Some may have secure employment and settled status. Others may be seeking asylum, newly recognised as refugees, on temporary visas, undocumented, or subject to No Recourse to Public Funds. Every status influence eligibility, assurance, access to governmental assistance, documentation, and risk.

For asylum seekers and refugees, the transition from asylum support to mainstream housing can be especially difficult. Home Office statistics furnish information at the local authority level regarding asylum seekers who are getting assistance, including support relating to accommodation (Home Office, 2026). Newham's refugee support information also recognises that people who receive refugee status may have to move out of asylum accommodation quickly and may need support to find alternative accommodation (London Borough of Newham, n.d.-a). This creates a practical moment of vulnerability where legal status changes but housing stability is not guaranteed.

D. Formal Services Exist, but Residents May Experience Fragmentation

The fourth finding is that formal services and policies are in place; nonetheless, residents can perceive them as disjointed. Housing, homelessness prevention, sanctuary, welfare assistance, immigration guidance, health services, educational institutions, English-language support, and community integration may be managed through separate departments or organisations. A migrant inhabitant, meanwhile, experiences these needs collectively.

The GLA Asylum Welcome Toolkit promotes cohesive strategies across local authorities that link asylum responses, social integration, outreach, safeguarding, and borough-wide planning (Greater London Authority, 2024). Newham’s Borough of Sanctuary Strategy also creates an important framework for hospitality and inclusivity (London Borough of Newham, 2024a). The remaining gap is practical navigation: residents need to know where to go, whom to trust, what documents to prepare and how to avoid unsafe advice or exploitation.

E. Private Rented Sector Regulation Must Be Matched with Rights Awareness

The fifth finding pertains to the private rented sector. Newham has implemented property licensing and landlord regulations to tackle inadequate housing conditions, overcrowding, and management issues within the private rented sector (London Borough of Newham, 2024b). Nevertheless, regulation is only beneficial for at-risk tenants if they are aware of how to utilise it.

Migrant tenants could be unaware of the licensing requirements for their property, the procedure for reporting disrepair, methods for collecting evidence, their entitlements, or the appropriate time to seek counsel. Some tenants may fear retribution, displacement, disputes with landlords, or immigration consequences. Consequently, the regulation of the private rented sector should be complemented with multilingual education on tenant rights and reliable community-based navigation.

F. Belonging Depends on Housing Stability and Social Connection

The sixth finding is that a sense of belonging is contingent upon both housing stability and social connection. Ager and Strang (2008) recognise social bonds, social bridges, and social links as essential components of integration. Social ties unite individuals within known communities; social bridges link individuals across different communities; and social connections associate individuals with institutions. In Forest Gate/Newham, all three components are essential.

Housing instability undermines these connections. overcrowded or temporary accommodation can hinder families’ involvement in educational institutions, faith communities, community events, or local affairs. Regular

relocations hinder the stability of friendships and the continuity of services. Substandard living circumstances can lead to anxiety, embarrassment, health issues, and social isolation. Conversely, stable accommodation, transparent information, and welcoming community spaces can support confidence and participation.

G. Historical Insights Indicate That Accommodation Necessitates Mediation and Legitimacy

The seventh finding is derived from a historical perspective. Early medieval migration and settlement show that accommodation was not simply about physical placement. It involved negotiated arrangements, legal recognition, obligations, property relations, host-newcomer relationships and institutional mediation (Goffart, 1980; Halsall, 2007). The relevance for this study is not direct policy borrowing but conceptual insight.

Contemporary Forest Gate/Newham functions in accordance with current housing legislation, immigration regulations, human rights standards, and municipal governance frameworks. Nevertheless, the historical lesson remains useful: where movement, settlement and scarce accommodation meet, societies need trusted intermediaries, recognised rules and shared expectations. In the absence of these, housing pressure may lead to distrust, exploitation, unofficial agreements, and discord. A community navigator model can therefore be understood as a modern form of mediation between residents, services and local institutions.

1) Contested Post-Roman Migration: Host Response, Identity Formation and Long-Term Belonging: The post-Roman British case adds a more specific historical answer to the sixth sub-question. First, it suggests that host-community responses are dynamic rather than permanently welcoming or permanently hostile. The invitation tradition presents an initial relationship framed by perceived need and authorised by local rulers, while the same narrative later describes deteriorating expectations, disputes and violence (Flierman & Welton, 2021). Because the historical sequence is contested, the lesson is not that invitation inevitably leads to conflict. The more defensible insight is that reception depends on legitimacy, expectations, power and perceptions of resources. In Forest Gate/Newham, this reinforces the need for transparent communication about housing and service rules, opportunities for long-term residents to express concerns without migrants being scapegoated, and trusted intermediaries who can explain systems to newcomers and host communities. Second, the evidence shows that settlement can change the meaning of migrant identity over time. Archaeological and genetic scholarship supports substantial movement into parts of early medieval England, but it also reveals regional variation, continued interaction with existing populations and mixed ancestry within communities (Härke, 2011; Gretzinger et al., 2022). This weakens a simple model in which two unchanged

populations—'migrant' and 'host'—remain socially separate. Applied cautiously to Forest Gate/Newham, migrant identity should therefore be understood as layered and relational. Residents may sustain family, linguistic, religious or national attachments while simultaneously forming identities as neighbours, Newham residents, Londoners and, where relevant, British citizens. Integration need not require the erasure of prior identity in order for local belonging to deepen.

Third, intermarriage and other forms of family formation matter because they make belonging intergenerational. Ancient DNA cannot identify the legal character of individual relationships, but population admixture demonstrates that local and migrant-descended populations did not remain biologically isolated across generations (Gretzinger et al., 2022). Once households, kinship networks and descendants cross origin categories, the distinction between 'host' and 'newcomer' becomes less stable. A contemporary parallel can be drawn only at the level of social process: long-term belonging in Newham may develop through mixed households, children attending local schools, employment, neighbourhood ties, faith communities, friendships and civic participation. This supports an integration approach that follows the life course and subsequent generations rather than treating migration as a permanent arrival-stage identity.

Fourth, conflict and cultural change should be read as separate but related processes. Early written sources preserve memories of warfare, displacement and political struggle, whereas archaeological evidence also points to interaction, adaptation and the emergence of new identities. Conflict should therefore be treated as a warning about what can happen when resource pressure, unclear obligations, unequal power and polarising narratives harden group boundaries—not as a normal or inevitable consequence of migration. Cultural change is likewise not one-directional. Newcomers adapt to the receiving society, but the receiving locality is also changed by their presence. Newham's contemporary diversity can be understood within this broader principle of cumulative local change, while remaining fundamentally different from the political conditions of early medieval Britain.

Taken together, the historical comparison informs contemporary understanding in three limited but useful ways. Host-community responses are shaped by institutions, narratives and perceived fairness rather than by diversity alone; migrant identities are formed through interaction and can become multiple rather than simply replacing one identity with another; and long-term belonging is an intergenerational process that can outlast the categories used at the moment of arrival. These insights strengthen the rationale for the Forest Gate Housing and Belonging Navigator Program because navigation should connect not only migrants to services but also residents to shared

information, trusted mediation and opportunities for social bridges across communities (Ager & Strang, 2008; Phillimore, 2021).

As a supplemental implication, the proposed navigator model could include a small host-community cohesion strand: periodic housing, migration and belonging forums involving migrant residents and long-term residents; multilingual 'myth and fact' information on housing and service eligibility; and local-history or neighbourhood sessions that frame belonging as something built through participation over time. This would remain within the programme's signposting and community-connection role and would not convert volunteers into legal, immigration or historical authorities.

H. Proposed Solution: Forest Gate Housing and Belonging Navigator Program

The study suggests a Forest Gate Housing and Belonging Navigator Program as an economical community solution. The program would train local volunteers, including migrants with lived experience, faith leaders, students, community workers and long-term residents, to guide migrant residents toward trusted housing, immigration and community support services.

The program will not supplant legal counsel, municipal services, or expert case management. Its role would be signposting, explanation, preparation and safe referral. Volunteers would assist residents in comprehending where to go, which documents to provide, what enquiries to make, how to obtain translated resources, and how to evade unreliable guidance. Definitive boundaries are crucial to guarantee that navigators refrain from offering unregulated immigration or legal counsel.

The program could function via established community locations like libraries, educational institutions, religious establishments, community hubs, and voluntary organisations. Its functional resources may encompass a multilingual housing rights manual, a digital directory of reliable services, a WhatsApp information platform, monthly sessions on housing and community belonging, and referral routes to Newham Council, accredited advisory entities, ESOL programs, health and wellness assistance, and community organisations.

The model is economical as it does not necessitate a new facility or extensive personnel framework. It leverages current local infrastructure and can be sustained through volunteer training, small grants, council collaboration, faith partnerships and community organisations. It aligns with Newham's sanctuary and cohesion commitments by linking housing navigation with welcome, trust and belonging.

I. Implementation Framework

A pilot program may be executed in four phases. The initial phase involves service mapping, identifying reliable housing, immigration, welfare, health, educational, ESOL,

and community support services in Forest Gate and Newham. The subsequent phase would entail co-design, involving migrant residents, municipal officials, faith institutions, educational institutions, community groups, and advisory services. The third phase would involve training for volunteers, covering safeguarding, confidentiality, boundaries, referral pathways, fundamental tenant rights, communication, and cultural sensitivity. The fourth phase would be delivery, featuring monthly sessions, a digital information platform, and continuous referral assistance.

Monitoring should be simple and proportionate. Useful metrics would include number of residents reached, number of referrals made, languages covered, common issues raised, resident satisfaction, repeat attendance and evidence of increased confidence in navigating services. A subsequent assessment may investigate if the program enhances trust, diminishes crisis occurrences, and fortifies community attachment.

VII. FUTURE WORKS

Subsequent investigations ought to incorporate primary data from migrant residents in Forest Gate/Newham. Interviews, focus groups or participatory workshops would help test whether the gaps identified through secondary data reflect lived experience. Particular attention should be given to refugees, asylum seekers, people with No Recourse to Public Funds, migrant workers, students, families in overcrowded housing and long-settled migrant-background residents.

Future efforts ought to generate a comprehensive service map encompassing housing, immigration, welfare, ESOL, health, and community support services in Forest Gate/Newham. This map has the potential to serve as both a scholarly output and a valuable community resource. It would assist in identifying service duplication, referral gaps, language barriers, and prospects for collaboration.

A future phase ought to initiate the Forest Gate Housing and Belonging Navigator Program. A six-month trial might evaluate practicality, volunteer enlistment, training requirements, protecting hazards, referral security, resident participation, and collaborative assistance. A mixed-methods assessment may integrate attendance logs, referral statistics, user evaluations, and discussions with service providers.

Comparative research may additionally investigate analogous boroughs in East London, such as Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, and Redbridge. This would assist in ascertaining if the patterns observed in Newham are unique to the boroughs or indicative of a broader East London housing and migration context.

Ultimately, the historical aspect might be expanded upon. Comparative historical analysis could investigate how various communities have handled the integration of

newcomers, the responsibilities of hosts, and the sense of local belonging, while steering clear of oversimplified or idealised historical parallels.

Future primary research could also test the sixth sub-question directly by asking both migrant-background and long-term Forest Gate residents how they understand invitation or welcome, settlement, mixed families, neighbourhood change, conflict, identity and the point at which a newcomer is regarded as belonging. This would allow the historical comparison to generate empirically testable contemporary questions rather than functioning only as an interpretive analogy.

VIII. STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study possesses numerous constraints. First, it relies on secondary data and documentary analysis. It excludes direct interviews with migrant inhabitants, property owners, municipal officials, religious leaders, community advocates, or advisory service providers. Consequently, the findings ought to be regarded as evidence-based interpretations rather than direct accounts of lived experience.

Secondly, certain statistics are accessible at the borough level rather than the neighbourhood level. This indicates that findings at the Newham level may not entirely reflect the unique circumstances of Forest Gate. Forest Gate is designated as the suggested pilot location; nevertheless, more detailed neighbourhood data is essential for accurate local planning.

Third, the 2021 Census offers a robust demographic foundation, however it may not entirely capture the latest trends in migration, asylum housing patterns, refugee relocation pressures, or alterations in housing post-pandemic. Data from the Home Office and local authorities can enhance the understanding, however immigration datasets are influenced by evolving classifications, reporting intervals, and policy shifts.

Fourth, the proposed navigator program is conceptual. It has not been executed or assessed as of yet. The efficacy would rely on the training of volunteers, the quality of safeguarding, the calibre of partnerships, the precision of referrals, the ability to translate, and the trust established among residents.

Fifth, the historical analysis of early mediaeval migration is limited. Contemporary London functions within the framework of modern legislation, democratic administration, controlled housing policies, and human rights standards. Accommodations arrangements from the early mediaeval period cannot be immediately applied to contemporary contexts. The comparison is used only to identify broad lessons about mediation, legitimacy and settlement under pressure.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the research enhances comprehension of how immigration status, housing

pressure, and community support influence accommodation experiences and belonging in a diverse urban borough. It also offers a practical, low-cost intervention that can be refined through community engagement, piloting and further research.

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