

Ethical issues in the uk government



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Part 1: Case study analysis [D1]

Question 1: Describe the main activities pursued by government.

The UK government is a democratically elected entity that has jurisdictional rule over Great Britain and Northern Ireland forming what is commonly known as the United Kingdom. This government is led by the Prime Minister and consists of a tripartite system of a legislative, executive and judicial branches in order to rule consistently and fairly. In the case of the UK government, the legislative branch consists of the Cabinet, which is made up of government ministers who are responsible for making and deciding laws. The executive and legal branches represent the two Houses of Parliament; The House of Commons and The House of Lords respectively. The House of Commons carries out laws and represents people's (constituencies) interests and the House of Lords scrutinise, amend and evaluate laws. There is also the Supreme Court, which also deals with judicial matters. The UK government also has a monarch figure head in the form of the Queen, who reads out decisions made in her speech.

The UK government is responsible for protecting and providing both the economic and social systems of UK society by implementing decent laws for financial stability in UK markets and for providing public services including health care, education and transport for all members of society and including decent legislation to safeguard the quality of jobs and the welfare of citizens. Housing could be incorporated into that list as housing issues are a current concern in the UK. (Jon Elledge 2017). Some say housing should be top priority for the government. (DCLG priority objectives, 2015 to 2020). The

debates around housing vary between demands for the government to build more homes to combat the housing deficiencies around the country, due to densely populated towns and cities. Arguments around redeveloping inner cities and building new social housing on existing brown field sites, or capping private rental fees are all feasible with some ingenuity and forward planning by a willing government.

Discuss the role of government in the case study provided.

On the other side of the spectrum are the super-rich who, over many years, have been able to spend small fortunes on acquiring houses in London and other parts of the UK. The case study analysis (Booth, 2016) shows that the UK government has woken up to the fact that some rich millionaires are taking liberties by buying up properties in the UK, using money from questionable sources. The article shows the government has acted proactively and quite boldly to establish a legal framework to put new “ anti-corruption rules cracking down on offshore secrecy” (Booth, 2016) in place to allow for a more transparent process when wealthy investors buy up expensive UK properties. This action by the government to ensure overseas investors and offshore companies have to “ join a public register of beneficial ownership” (Booth, 2016) will reduce corruption in the housing industry. Implementing this legal framework will act as a precedent in safeguarding the UK housing market. It is a bold move by the government because the article points out many extremely affluent people may sell up their homes and relocate elsewhere as they will lose their anonymity in the UK once this new legislation becomes law.

Question 2: Describe how supply and demand interact to shape prices and discuss how this applies to London's property market.

The property market is extremely unique in regards to supply and demand concepts. In the property market demand outstrips supply and some of the determinants of this is due to the increases in population, the obtainability of available property and stamp duty costs. There is a lack of 'Ceteris paribus' meaning that all is not equal or held constant in the UK property market at the moment. (Alessandro Sancino, 2015) Before the economic crisis in 2008, house prices continued to soar at unprecedented levels allowing the equilibrium of supply and demand in the property industry to go off track. The economic crash brought with it opportunities for regulating the property market, and allows the elasticity of demand to fall back in line with supply and bring the levels of equilibrium back to an level playing field for the UK property market.

Question 3: Using one theory of ethics, describe the key ethical issues in the case and what you think the Prime Minister should do.

A theory of ethics that is relevant for this discussion would be the ethics around justice in organisations and societies. Justice is " an ethical perspective that takes account of how benefits and resources are distributed in a society, or even within an organisation. It asks one to think about how one might design just opportunities and the distribution of wealth". (Owain SmoloviÄ±-Jones, 2015). This theory of ethics would be ideal for the UK government to consider when implementing regulation of the housing market. Ideas around the distributive justice is imperative for a democratic

government. I think that this type of ethics is important in regulating the property market because it gives young people a better chance to own their own home and not be priced out the housing market for the foreseeable future. The government that was in power when the case study was written was run by the Conservative Party and led by David Cameron. That government has overtones of having a capitalist perspective, which holds that justice is determined by the benefits generated through work which should be distributed according to contribution. In order to apply to a greater demographic of society, that particular government incorporated elements of justice through a socialist perspective to gain greater appeal. This may have been the thinking behind regulating the housing market in the fashion they chose as highlighted in the case study. (Booth, 2016) So that not only the super-rich would benefit from future home ownership in London. This thinking was right in order for the government to show that they are listening to the concerns about the need for regulation in the property sector being generated by MPs, who have been speaking on behalf of their constituents.

Question 4: Identified two human rights that are important in the case. Explain why these are important and how the Prime Minister should respond.

There are two human rights from the Declaration of Human Rights charter (1948) that are relevant for discussion here. The first, Article 12, states that “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference

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or attacks". (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The UK government should factor in this human rights' article in regards to the implications of regulating the London housing market because the case study (Booth, 2016) shows that the super-rich could abandon plans to buy homes in Britain, as they would lose their anonymity once they join the public register for foreign home ownership in the UK. The government should respond to these concerns by putting plans in place, maybe through an advisory board, to make sure the public register, although public, is not used as a tool by the media to scapegoat the super-rich and scaremonger the wider public with tales of unfair home ownership by foreign investors. As undoubtable, the super-rich do make substantial contributions to the UK economy that the government would not want to lose.

The second, Article 17 states that " everyone should be able to purchase property in their home country" (Human Rights Declaration, 1948). This is self-explanatory and affords the government leverage to act on behalf of the interests of British citizens without breaking any discriminatory laws.

Currently house prices are soaring at an increasing extent and arguments widely heard include that buying homes are becoming increasingly difficult for first time buyers, and young people to purchase. Due in part to the huge deposits needed to secure a mortgage and the ominous increases in the private rental market.

The UK government could use this article to their advantage by stating that this regulatory measure will be used as a stepping stone for further regulation of the housing market and look to tackle these other issues as the next priority. Activities could include working with private sector businesses

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through Public Private Partnerships to build more homes on existing brownfield sites and factor in through further legislation that only a third of those homes can be sold to foreign investors, whilst two-thirds are ring-fenced for British citizens using, on this occasion, the controversial concept of positive discrimination in regards to British citizens seen as priority over foreign investors.

References

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[D1]I note straight awqay that you have not used the full word count. You appear to be short by several hundred words. Please ensure you use the full allowance in your EMA. While quantity doies not guarantee quality, by missing out on so many words there will be an effect on the quality fo your work.