

Planning for a better London

In July '08 the new Mayor of London, Boris Johnson published 'Planning for a better London'. In this short document (38 pages), he sets out key areas that he wants to address in revisions to the London Plan. He suggests the document is not a comprehensive statement of planning policy, but rather a 'direction of travel' which will characterise his term as Mayor. A complete review of the London Plan is proposed, as recommended by the Panel of the Examination in Public of the Further Alterations to the London Plan. This is to be completed by 2012.

The document is divided into 4 sections with 'key' questions asked at the end of each. The deadline for comments on the document is 10th Nov '08.

Comments should be posted to: Andrew Barry-Purssell, Head of London Plan, Greater London Authority, City Hall, More London, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA, or emailed to Mayor@london.gov.uk with 'Planning for a Better London' in the subject box.

Section 1. The Mayor's Approach

- A new consensual approach is to be developed. City Hall, with support of the GLA Group of organisations, particularly the London Development Agency and Transport for London, will work with boroughs and others from the public, private and voluntary sectors to help agree the objectives for planning in London and how they can best be delivered.
- Focus is to be on overall outcomes rather than processes or structures. There will be less emphasis on targets, but rigorous monitoring and policy implementation.
- The previous emphasis on evidence-based policy making will continue as will commitment to tackling disadvantage in inner London. Greater emphasis is to be given to issues affecting outer London.
- The current model of sub-regional working is to be reviewed (it is suggested they may hinder major cross boundary developments) and better joint agreements between sub regions are to be promoted. Sub-regional implementation frameworks are in the mean time suspended.
- Possible improvements to the existing Inter-regional Planning Forum are to be examined to improve relationships with neighbouring regions.
- Underlying analysis and strategy of the current London Plan is supported, particularly: emphasis on London's continued economic and demographic growth within existing boundaries; protection and enhancement of London's world city role; climate change and environmental quality focus and promotion of social inclusion. The Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, London's green and open spaces are to be protected.

- Best standards of energy efficiency, inclusive accessible design and high quality architecture are to be promoted. Much needed investment in London's existing fabric is to be supported, but the Mayor will insist that it is appropriate to its context.
- The Mayor's focus will be on genuinely strategic issues; he will not try to do things that are better done at the local level and 'where intervening would add no value'. He intends to use his powers to take over planning applications that are of 'potential strategic importance' carefully and sparingly and will not re-open decisions made by the previous mayor.
- The London Plan will be a more concise statement of strategic policy, within which more detailed policies and other Mayoral strategies can sit, 'adopting a similar approach to those being applied by local authorities in Local Development Frameworks and by other regions'.
- Supplementary planning guidance, best practice guidance and implementation reports are to be reinforced, ensuring retention of strategic focus and 'making them more user friendly to developers, decision-makers and other' and ways of 'bringing stakeholders into the process at an earlier stage' is to be examined.
- An annual London Planning Convention is proposed.

Section 2. The Key Challenges

- **Continued population growth.** Recent projections are for a population of between 7.96 and 8.14 million by 2016 and 8.27 – 8.61 m by 2026.
- The composition of London's population is changing. It will continue to be younger than elsewhere in the UK.
- Increases in number of London children will result in greater demand for land for schools.
- The number of households is projected to grow – by 560,000 to possibly 70,000 between 2006 and 2026 – three quarters of which will be one person households; (concentrated in the 45 – 54 age groups).
- London's population is increasingly ethnically diverse. It is expected that BME communities will form 40% of the total London population by 2026.
- **London's economy** accounts for just under a fifth of the UK's output. In the last decade its economy has grown on average by 3.1% a year compared to 2.4% in the rest of the country. London is more heavily private sector based, accounting for 76% of London's employment. (17% is public sector and 7% non-for-profit). At the same time London has entrenched problems of unemployment / economic inactivity – with persistent problems of deprivation, social exclusion and discrimination.
- London's economy is likely to continue to grow, driven by growth in population and demands for more goods and services. (It is estimated that an extra 1000 residents generates around 230 new local jobs). London's economy has become increasingly service-based. Inner London has seen growth in business and finance services, office-based sectors, leisure and personal services. Outer London accounts for 42% of London's jobs. An estimated 8.1 million sq meters of office space may be needed by 2026. London is likely to require an additional 40,000 hotel rooms in the next 20

years, increasingly outside central London. The potential for all parts of London should be realised.

- **Improving the environment and tackling climate change.** Flooding, subsidence, overheating, problems of water supply, stresses on flora and fauna will continue. Response to climate change needs to be twofold – adaptation to change and mitigation of further change. This includes reducing London’s emissions of gasses and using the planning system to promote energy efficient design and construction, greater efficiency in use of resources and the use of renewable energy sources. The Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land around London have a key role to play.
- London has grown organically over the centuries. The diversity of its neighbourhoods and rich mix of old and new are part of London’s greatest assets. Familiar landmarks and architectural heritage should be protected and new development should consistently be of high standard.
- The problems of **affordability of housing** have resulted in a growing housing divide, exacerbating poverty and social exclusion issues.
- **Planning for all Londoners.** BME unemployment is often concentrated in areas of high deprivation. London has high levels of child poverty and health inequalities. Action should sometimes target needs of particular groups but often more general approaches might be applied to bring particular benefit to disadvantaged communities e.g. promoting Lifetime Homes and Lifetime neighbourhoods to ensure accessibility to all. Local employment opportunities, suitable housing, social infrastructure, secure youth and health facilities, retention of local hospitals and family general practices are supported to help tackle problems of deprivation.
- **Planning for the whole of London.** The need for supporting infrastructure (including transport) along with housing growth in the Thames Gateway and a more ‘balanced approach’ to the capital’s development (including outer London) are highlighted.

Section 3. Key Policy Responses

- **Ensuring London’s continued economic success.** It is suggested that the focus on central London and its place in the world economy – multi-nationals and banks, overlooks outer London and the greater presence of larger companies in London than elsewhere in the UK. Greater focus on outer London (town centres) is proposed and for people to work closer to where they live to provide benefits of reducing the strain on transport links into central London. It is proposed that physical improvements should be complemented by skills and other programmes to enable people living locally to make the most of new opportunities and that success lies in linking central London’s large or global markets with the smaller ones of outer London and the SE.
- Specifically proposed are: an implementation framework for key areas of London’s economy; support for all London’s enterprises - from multi-national to small; creation of an outer London Commission; a planning policy framework to be published to deal with issues facing the Central Activity Zone. Support is given for a diverse retail sector; for improvements

the W End (in partnership with Camden and Westminster councils) and for the use of section 106 agreements to require developers to make provision for small units in major retail schemes is. Construction of tall buildings in appropriate locations (where there are existing clusters such as the Isle of Dogs, the City or Croydon) is to be supported

- **Delivering homes for Londoners** The draft Housing Strategy, outlining how resources available for housing in London will deliver objectives, is to be published in 2008. The commitment to deliver 50,000 affordable homes over the next 3 years is held. The Mayor though believes more can be achieved by the GLA working with the new Homes and Communities Agency than setting rigid targets and 'publicly berating those who fall foul of them, or by seeking to micro-manage the number of affordable units that should be provided on each site.'
- Specific priorities proposed include – a new housing needs, capacity and markets survey with binding agreements set out with boroughs on the delivery of housing. Higher proportions of shared ownership and other intermediate housing will be enabled. Revised supplementary planning guidance on housing is to be published and a major seminar held as a first step, to explore issues in more detail. Strong policy support is to be given for family sized homes and initiatives set up to assist people getting onto the 'housing ladder'. Standards for quality, liveability and sustainability of neighbourhoods are to be improved; including encouraging lifetime home, encouragement for minimise opportunities for crime and ASB in buildings and neighbourhoods. Back gardens and playing fields to be protected from development and good play, sport and recreation facilities encouraged.
- **Allowing Londoners to enjoy their city in safety.** Further guidance is to be issues on designing out crime and ASB.
- **Meeting the environmental challenge.** Proposals include: Special Planning Guidance (SPG) on micro-generation and on-site renewable energy; opportunities for providing low carbon energy options to be explored; green belt, gardens, playing fields and open spaces to be protected through stronger SPG; best practice guidance to be issues on protection of and planting of new trees and woodland; changes to the London Plan to makes the most of London's heritage and to enhances London's historic environment.
- **Keeping London moving.** The Mayor's Transport Strategy is to be reviewed as an early priority. Increased focus on outer London will aim to reduce the need for travelling longer distances. The third runway at Heathrow is opposed; SPG is to be considered for standards for cycle parking and a bicycle hire scheme is proposed. Additional guidance and best practice regarding the use of the Thames for transportation of goods and people is to be considered. A new airport in E London is proposed.
- **Planning for London's diverse places.** It is proposed the Mayor will ensure new communities in the Thames Gateway are just that and not simply large housing estates without transport and social infrastructure. He proposes maximising the area as a location for innovation and the development of 'green' enterprises. Realistic plans are to be set out to

make the most of the legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is proposed that section 106 contributions will be made to Crossrail.

Section 4. Making it happen

This section sets out a timetable of changes until 2012.

London Plan

July – October '08. Consideration given to altering the London Plan to enable the use of the planning system to raise contributions towards the funding of Crossrail.

July – March '09. Start process to alter the London Plan and deal with a number of housing issues, including targets for affordable housing, protection of gardens; design policy, including tall buildings and strengthening policies around designing out crime and other changes required in policies on economic or environmental issues e.g. outer London climate change. It is likely that these alterations will be in place for formal publication towards the end of 2010.

July '08 – Jan '09 Work will start on a complete review of the London Plan, to produce a new kind of document that will be completed by 2012.

Supplementary Documents

The following list of items may change, reflecting changing circumstances and priorities. Over a 12 month period (from July '08) it is intended to publish:

- A revision of the London View Management Framework is already under way.
- A new Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- Revised SPG on sustainable design, construction and renewable energy.
- Revised SPG on accessibility and ensuing inclusive environments
- Best Practice Guidance (BPG) on open spaces strategies
- An Implementation report on London's biodiversity

During 09/10 it is intended to publish SPGs dealing with

- Town Centres, retail need and leisure
- A planning framework for the development of the Central Activities Zone
- Green infrastructure
- Encouraging cycling and walking
- BPG on designing out crime and anti-social behaviour

During 2010 /11, it is intended to publish SPGs on

- Trees and woodland
- Waterways
- Outer London (to take account of recommendations of the commission to be set up to examine policies for outer London)
- BPG on London's sports facilities

LTF is an umbrella organisation bringing together London's borough wide council tenant federations and organisations

London Tenants Federation, C/o Camden Federation of T&RA, 11-17 The Marr, Camden St, London NW1 0HE
E-mail info@londontenants.org Tel 020 7874 5464 Web Address www.londontenants.org