

London Forum *Insights*

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Editorial

This issue contains a report on our AGM and updates on the Autumn Budget as well as our usual "Around the Societies" which gives us a London wide picture of common issues and challenges. We're in a time of change with new planning and housing policies that could threaten the community voices that we represent. This will be a key feature of the Forum's activities in 2025. Member involvement is vital as we are a volunteer organisation.

We would also like to take the opportunity to send best wishes to all our member societies for the upcoming festive season.

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1. Chair's Report

Many of you will already know that I have taken over from Peter Eversden as Chair of the London Forum, following my nomination and election at the AGM on 17 October. I am of course deeply honoured to take on the role of Chair, and to succeed Peter in that position. Peter has served as Chair for the past 25 years, and as Secretary before that. I do not, and cannot, hope to serve for that long; nor do I come to the role with anything like Peter's experience and expertise. I am therefore extremely grateful that he will continue to be active as Vice President, and to attend meetings of the Executive Committee and the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee. We shall not therefore lose Peter's expert contributions to the work of the Forum for some time to come.

I have served as one of the Forum's trustees for the past six years, and I am also currently Chair of the Battersea Society, where I have been active for many years. In my new role as Chair of the Forum, I hope to get to know more about as many of our member societies as possible, and to ensure that we offer valuable services to all of them. Two-way communications are essential if we are to achieve that, and I want to encourage all societies to let us know about your activities and the issues that concern you; and as a key part of that, to contribute your thoughts and ideas when we seek to influence both the Government's and the Mayor's policies, and to respond to their various initiatives and consultations.

There is much to do on that front already, as the new Government seeks to introduce significant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, and work begins in earnest on the new London Plan. You can read more about what we have been working on already in the [What We've Said](#) pages on the website; and about what's in the offing in the articles in this issue of *Insights*, particularly those from Michael Bach and Andrew Bosi. I look forward to working with you in our joint endeavours to protect and improve the quality of life for the benefit of all who live and work in London.

Michael Jubb

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2. Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held on 17th October and over 30 Member societies attended. The meeting was particularly special because Peter Eversden, our Chair was standing down after 24 years in the role. His formative influence on the development of the Forum as a highly respected voice and representative of London's Civic amenities societies has been profound.

He chaired the AGM and gave a report on the past 12 month's activities.

Report by Chair, Peter Eversden

Peter welcomed everyone and advised that, as well as the formal business this evening, we will have talks by London Forum's Patron Tony Travers of the LSE and Jane Maggs, a Civic Voice Board member.

As in the 'Review of the Year' of the Annual Report and in editions of Insights issued, the previous Government's many planning policy consultations and changes dominated the first part of this year from July 2023.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) was passed in October 2023 with some improvements made in the Lords which I had sought there in a meeting with the Labour Peer, Baroness Taylor of Stevenage who is now a Minister in the recently re-named Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The new Labour Government will not enact unimplemented content of that Act and they have published their own proposed amendments to the NPPF and a Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

London Forum opposed many proposals for permitted development rights (PDR), as reported by Michael Jubb in this year's March edition of Insights. We will continue to do so, as PDR takes away the right of communities and their borough to make decisions on what development shall occur.

The then Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, blamed Sadiq Khan in a letter for failure to provide the homes London needs. He ignored the fact that there are many thousands of homes in approved schemes which developers are not building, Gove asked Chris Katkowski KC to review what policies in the London Plan were preventing housing delivery.

Better use of brownfield land was one of the recommendations and London Forum responded in March this year to a consultation on that subject, as in the 'What We've Said' section of the website. The new Government is insisting on more and better use of brownfield land but that should not change development in London which is usually on such sites.

Gove's direction to review and report on the state of the 47 Opportunity Areas in London was sensible but his insistence for development on industrial land was ill conceived.

It showed failure to understand London's economy and its needs and how unsustainable for homes many of those sites would be with their lack of social infrastructure and transport. London Forum will ensure the new Government understands that.

John Allen for London Forum responded critically to a GLA London Plan Guidance consultation on industrial land that could have helped boroughs plan for such sites if it had been published with the March 2021 London Plan, not years later.

The Labour Government expects a new London Plan to be devised to update strategies and policies to meet London's needs.

Preparation work for that has been underway by the GLA since the Summer of last year with views gathered through 'Talk London' and in workshops and calls for evidence through the 'Planning for London Programme' in which London Forum's trustees and some of our members participated.

The year covered by this Annual Report was interrupted in its last part by elections.

City Hall shut down for campaigning in March before the GLA elections and the pre-election purdah period meant we could not get local authority speakers for our planned event for members on enforcement. It caused also the deferment to May of our very interesting event on the Thames Policy Areas and associated strategies.

The General Election called suddenly for July had the same effect on another of our planned events for you on housing which we plan to put on early next year when policy is clearer.

However, we held some well received open events before then as described in the annual report, one on the important topic of "Is building on London's Green Belt Inevitable?". We will see what the Government policy on that subject will be, following their description of 'Grey Belt', and then how boroughs will respond.

There has been a lot for London Forum to cover in the year and I hope you share my sense of pride in what has been achieved. I extend my thanks and, I hope, your appreciation to the members of our Executive and of our Planning, Environment and Transport committee members for their hard work. Michael Bach is chair of that committee and has contributed extensively to our responses to Government and GLA consultations.

It is pleasing to see that many of our members are submitting their own input to consultations to draw attention to the local implications of proposals.

Our Member Services Committee which includes representation from some of your organisations conducted a survey of your communications requirements. It covers membership, the organisation of open meetings, website improvements, e-bulletin mailouts and plans content of Insights.

It is very sad to report that our Vice President, Nicky Gavron, died recently. Nicky was a leading London politician whose career spanned 50 years from the 1970s. She was the first deputy mayor of London, following a successful career at Haringey council and as chair of the London planning advisory committee (LPAC), and was a Labour London Assembly Member for 21 years influencing the content of London Plans.”

Our Treasurer, Stephen Speak, presented the Financial Report and the meeting gave approval of the London Forum Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 and the appointment of an Honorary Independent Examiner, Miles Storey, who is prepared to continue in that role

The formal business covered proposed changes to London Forum’s Constitution to reflect and update our administration. They were approved.

The election of Trustees and Officers

Three trustees are stepping down this year, Stephen Speak our Treasurer, Peter Evesden after over 24 years as Chair and Peter Pickering our long-term Minutes Secretary until recently.

The Chair thanked Stephen very much for his work of high quality for many years on our finances, for his guidance to the Executive and for the commissioning of our new website.

He also expressed appreciation of Peter’s significant contribution over many years including the benefit to the Forum of his experience on transport when in Government and for his feedback on achievements and frustrations of the Finchley Society.

Three new trustees have been nominated by societies this year, Ali Dezyanian of the Finchley Society, Richard Farthing of the Hammersmith Society and Lesley Hodsdon of the Greenwich Society who has been a volunteer member of our Member Services Committee and worked on production of the recent Insights.

In addition, Darian Mitchell stands down as the trustee who has been longest in office since their last appointment and seeks re-election.

The new trustees nominated by member societies and Darian were elected unanimously

Two of our trustees Paul Thornton and Helen Warner are ill but we look forward to their return after recovery.

At their last Executive meeting the trustees proposed that one of our trustees Michael Jubb be the new chair and was appointed.

The Chair advised that the succession planning London Forum has conducted and the system we have where trustees are 'buddying' officers in their work has helped us to maintain our team. That has been assisted by the very welcome responses of member societies who nominated the new trustees you have approved this evening in response to our request for the skills and experience we needed.

The following were elected to the Executive

Michael Jubb as Chair

Paul Thornton as Vice Chair

Clare Birks as Secretary

Ali Dezyanian as Treasurer and

Darian Mitchell as Minutes Secretary.

Peter Eversden will take up a new role as Vice President, as agreed in the minute E24.47 iv. of the Executive meeting on 20th August 2024.

Presentations

[\(Link to the individual slide decks\)](#)

New Government approach to planning

Tony Travers

Tony began his talk with a tribute to the late Nicki Gavron, mentioning her long term persistence and one of the tangible results, the introduction of Orbirail, the London Overground orbital route. His obituary for her is at the end of this article. Nicki had chaired LPAC and it was ironic that Mrs. Thatcher's abolition of the GLC had created a wider civic community with the formation of both it and the London Forum.

Turning to the present, the government approach to the NPPF was to reduce constraints on development. The planning system continues to be perceived as inhibiting growth. A histogram produced by the Economist showed housing supply in London meeting around a quarter of the demand for social rented/ affordable housing, a shortfall for lower rents of up to £700 per square foot, and a significant over-provision of dwellings above that threshold.

The impact on first time buyers was also stark. In the north of England, a mortgage requires around 20% of takehome pay: in London it is 60%.

Illustrations of over development in Wembley Park, Ilford, North Acton and Nine Elms demonstrated how the clamour for more housing is being met. Nine Elms was required to fund the

extension of the Northern line which in past times would have come from central government funds, leaving s.106 and its ilk to pay for infrastructure needed to support development (rather than development to support infrastructure).

Targets for housebuilding had moved backwards and forwards under the last government as (Prime) Ministers came and went. The current London target of 80,000 per annum was estimated by Lichfields to be double what would be delivered over each of the next ten years. Tony predicted that the tension between central and local desires would begin to manifest in the 2026 Borough elections.

Turning to what the Forum and its members can do, it was pointless to simply oppose the policy; there has to be an acceptance of the need for densification around former industrial sites and close to railway stations. We should draw attention to targets that are impossible to achieve – there is simply not enough space – and demand that the railway stations and their services have sufficient capacity. He suggested that more compulsory purchase should be encouraged, where larger sites could be created, as this would better facilitate higher densities without the need for excessive towers. We should also lobby for effective regulation of noise and disturbance during construction.

Questions and comments reflected that planning permission does not necessarily result in construction; the capacity of the construction industry to meet such high demand unless migration targets were relaxed; the misleading effect of wide angle lens photographs in planning applications; the need to ensure green provision, and for clarity on what forms the “grey belt”; the free pass for extending existing buildings seldom increased occupancy; the effect of stamp duty as a deterrent to moving house; the preference for development in the outer suburbs rather than the centre of the city, as in other countries; and the need for the community to be involved before the pre-application stage is complete and a deal made. Formal Community involvement would lead to more and better development.

[Tony Travers Guardian obituary for Nicky Gavron](#)

Civic Voice Presentation

Jane Maggs

Jane Maggs, Vice chair of Southgate District Civic Voice and a Trustee of Civic Voice, set out the background to the current civic movement.

Civic Voice was launched in 2010, following the demise of Civic Trust, to give a national voice to the civic movement. Just prior to the recent change of Government research by Reading University had shown that the 3 most significant risks to the movement were loss of members; government policy/reform and diminishing relevance. With the new government intent on significant change to planning policy, which is seen as holding back growth, the Civic Voice set about consulting

members to understand the issues and to form links with ministries and MP's to ensure that the community view is heard. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government told Civic Voice that 'community involvement in place-making is at the heart of the planning system'.

Civic Voice has created an expert panel to consider changes and respond to consultation on National Planning Policy Framework, surveyed its members, held roundtable discussions with Civic Societies and held meetings of the Regional Forum, which included London. A series of 'In conversation' webinars are in progress and can be found on the events page of their website.

The key headings of Civic Voice response to NPPF are:

- Housing affordability
- Community involvement
- Strategic planning
- Net zero and VAT reform

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice has stressed that 'communities should be at the heart of decision making, not side lined'.

The next round of discussion will respond to current consultations on Grey Belt vs Green Belt and Brownfield sites. 'In conversations' will continue, meetings of regional forum and expert panel will be held, and updates to members with latest news of how to get involved.

To conclude, Jane Maggs set out her thoughts on how Societies could influence national Planning Policy.

Locally: by strengthening our societies; networking and communicating with other societies and engage with councillors, council officers and your MP.

Regionally: Attend London Forum events and give your views. Civic Voice is a national organisation with only 17 members in London. The London Forum has over 100 members within London and will therefore be focussed on those areas of policy that affect the London region.

Nationally: Civic Voice will continue to talk to MHCLG and those present were encouraged to join in with all that Civic Voice has to offer as there are currently only 17 Forum societies who are members. However for many of them the subscription fee is too significant an expense.

She ended with the thought that 'local issues are guided by national legislation' therefore, to quote Walter Payton, 'we are stronger together than we are alone'

Jane urged London Forum members to attend the Civic Voice AGM on 7th December at 1pm
The Foundling Museum WC1N 1AZ

Audience questions after the talks covered a range of issues covering skill shortages in the construction industry, planning applications already approved but not built, threats to Metropolitan Open Land and tensions between higher densities and pressure on transport infrastructure, designed for a lower housing density.

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3. Around the Societies

The Barnet Society paid tribute to previous MP Theresa Villiers, as a widely respected constituency MP for Chipping Barnet and defender of the Green Belt, and aim to work with Dan Tomlinson, their first Labour MP for over 70 years, who, they note, will find himself on the front line when it comes to delivering the policy priority of house building, even if it means sacrificing some of the Green Belt, which will pose a challenge for outer London boroughs like Barnet, much of which is surrounded by Green Belt.

Labour's proposal for Barnet is for 3,700 new homes a year, compared with the Conservative target of 5,200 a year. Tomlinson says this has been achieved by "scrapping the additional political target" which the Conservatives had imposed on the Mayor of London, which was so high as to be almost impossible to meet. He agrees there was a case for considering new homes on low-quality or neglected "grey belt" land. The Society is pleased that Labour is prioritising new housing and a substantial proportion must be affordable. Barnet is dotted with Green Belt sites neglected for years, whether deliberately or not. But experience shows that the developments won't be affordable, a result of landowners deliberately neglecting their sites, and a trend for Green Belt sites to be sold for speculative purposes, and exacerbated by previous owners retaining a right to a share of the profits should future development be permitted. The government must restrict the price of "Grey" land to existing use value, or find other ways of capturing the profits of its development. Nurturing the Green Belt is vital, and Grey Belt development will only be acceptable if it meets a full range of community needs.

The biggest developments are likely to be at tube stations. Enfield has approved four towers on Cockfosters Station car park and a proposal for 20 towers up to 29 storeys high at Edgware has brought protesters onto the street. At High Barnet Station, TfL's proposals for 294 flats on the car park, which caused a public outcry, were shelved in 2021, the developer realising that the station complex is built on artificial land which is subsiding and requires expensive engineering work. Despite the expansion of the ULEZ, a recent survey found that Barnet exceeded World Health Organisation annual targets for breaches of daily average concentrations, and is worse than many other locations across London.

The Brixton Society have responded to the NPPF consultation. In particular, they commented that the presumption in favour of housing must apply only to vacant or previously occupied brownfield sites and must not override local policies protecting existing employment uses which meet local needs and local policies protecting existing employment uses which meet the needs of local business and employees”

Lambeth’s Climate Action Partnership aims to support innovative local action to tackle the climate crisis and reduce emissions. Businesses and other organisations are being invited to join Lambeth who are also running a consultation on their Night Time Strategy.

The Dulwich Society report that work has begun in Peckham Rye Park and Common to reduce the threat of surface water flooding to more than 100 nearby properties. Dulwich Park has been named London’s most picturesque running route. Bromley Council has approved plans to overhaul Crystal Palace Park including restoration of the Italian Terraces, the Paxton Bust and the dinosaur sculptures ,a new information centre, and landscape improvements.

The Ealing Society reports a slight slowdown in new planning applications over the summer. The application for a mixed scheme of student accommodation and offices on the Exchange Plaza site was approved despite its non-compliance with the emerging Local Plan, though the Society’s request for a condition that the student accommodation should only be used for this purpose to protect against conversion to sub-standard housing was accepted.

A larger scheme than the already approved one for the Kwik Fit site on Uxbridge Road was also granted; the Society objected to both on grounds of overdevelopment and poor residential amenity.

Ealing Council proudly announced that its planning service had been ranked as the highest placed in London and within the top 12 in the country. Many local residents found this surprising, given the many unpopular decisions that have been made, particularly in respect of tower blocks and the difficulties experienced in community engagement. However, the ranking was given by an industry magazine and based merely on how quickly the Council processes planning applications and how often decisions are upheld when challenged on appeals, the latter perhaps explained by Ealing’s very few planning refusals

The Hammersmith Society had a number of constructive meetings with the developers of the large Royal Masonic Hospital project, as a result of which they have achieved significant improvements. However, Earls Court remains the largest project in their area; after four years of discussion and consultation, an application has now been submitted but the 39 storey tower remaining disappointingly prominent.

The Hammersmith Bridge saga is now in its sixth year. Funding was held up with the change of government, and there’s not likely to be much, given the apparent state of public finances. The stabilisation work – reinforcing the cast iron pedestals – has been progressing slowly, with the bridge deck remaining closed until 2025, and costs have escalated again with £250m being

mentioned in the press. With funding key to progress, they have asked local MPs to raise their concerns. Surprisingly, the society's membership is equally split between replacement and restoration, such is the exasperation with it all!

The Highgate Society are part of a coalition fighting Camden's Dartmouth Park Healthy Neighbourhood scheme. The proposals have created alarm for the massive disruption they will cause to life and communications throughout the Highgate area and beyond, threatening to make all adjoining areas "unhealthy neighbourhoods". Proposed to address a very localised problem, there is no assessment of the consequences for the wider region and a public meeting in September showed overwhelming opposition over a wide area.

They are frustrated by Historic England's failure to process their application to have the Victorian Holborn Infirmary Buildings Statutorily Listed, even though the Conservation Area in which they stand was designated purely because of the buildings; repeated efforts to ascertain the status of their application have been stonewalled. An application recently submitted for the site will impose a 26-storey tower block for student accommodation, for which there is little need in the area, will have a hugely damaging impact on views over a wide area, including from Hampstead Heath and the top of Highgate Hill; it is feared that Islington will support it as a box-ticking exercise to boost their housing numbers.

The Society also sits on the City of London's statutory Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, where a new and serious problem being studied is pond pollution from dogs' flea treatment, undoubtedly a concern for ponds in parks everywhere.

A recent review by the **Streatham Society** of the High Road conservation area flags up significant buildings which are vacant and in disrepair. One is Streatham Hill Theatre; plans for improvements are glacial and damp and water penetration is a problem. Another is the 1856 Streatham Hill Station. Lambeth's talk about a dialogue with TfL and Network Rail to re-develop the site show no signs of progress.

One issue raised by residents is that it seems impossible to stop a planning juggernaut such as the Woodgate Towers Monolith, giving rise to concerns of other high-rise buildings in Streatham Vale, where there has been strong political pressure for high rise housing. Putting large developments on major transport hubs is a GLA requirement, plus the needs to meet demanding housing targets; but this contravened Lambeth's Local Plan against high rise. The local community is excluded from pre-application discussions, making consultation largely worthless.

The Teddington Society made a submission to the Local Plan Examination about improving design, delivering beautiful buildings and high-quality places. They and many residents opposed the designation of north of the railway station as a mid-rise zone (5-6 storeys), and supported proposals for increasing biodiversity and the quality of green spaces.

After much criticism of their Teddington Direct River Abstraction plan TDRA, Thames Water (TW) have removed four of the proposed pipeline shafts, but now plan a different pipeline with more than twice the size/capacity for treated effluent than was originally specified and a more significant shaft construction site in the vicinity of Ham House. Ofwat have classified TW's plan as inadequate, with "poor ambition" and unconvincing on "best value", an accusation consistently raised by local residents. As part of the process, TW is required to prepare a Statement of Community Consultation setting out how they will consult with the local community and with Richmond, Kingston and Hounslow local authorities. Meetings with local groups aim at ensuring that people affected by the TDRA can take part in a thorough, accessible and effective consultation exercise.

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4. Autumn Budget

The new government handed down its budget last month detailing new policies and tax changes. It has committed in the Budget to more than £5bn of investment over 2025-2026 to deliver the Government's ambitious plans on housing next year.

In the Budget, the Chancellor announced a range of measures to support Labour's target, including skills training, reforms to the planning system and additional assistance for affordable housing.

The government also committed to £3bn of additional support for SMEs and the build-to-rent sector – in the form of housing guarantee schemes – to support the private housing market. The government will provide £46m of additional funding to support recruitment and training of 300 graduates and apprentices into local planning authorities.

It will add £500m to the Affordable Homes Programme to "kickstart the biggest increase to social and affordable housebuilding in a generation", the Chancellor said, putting the country "on the path" to building 1.5m homes over this Parliament.

There will be a consultation on a new long-term social housing rent settlement of CPI plus one per cent for five years, which will offer long-term certainty for social housing providers. Social rents will increase annually by the Consumer Price Index measure of inflation plus one per cent, giving relief to social housing lenders. The government will consult on whether further potential measures, such as a 10-year settlement, "could provide more certainty".

Major Planning initiatives are also underway with the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework. This is focussed around the target of building 1.5 million new

homes. This includes broadening the definition of brownfield sites / grey belt land and an uplift in the density of urban areas.

London Forum will examine these policies to ensure that community voices are still an integral part of the planning process.

Transport in London and the Budget

Andrew Bosi

The heavily trailed Budget on October 30th contained two announcements for transport in London. In the following days they became a little, but not much, clearer. The Chancellor announced that an unspecified sum would be made available to commence tunnelling from Old Oak Common to Euston. Camden Council and others have heralded the end to uncertainty, but uncertainty remains. There is still no published means of approaching Euston. The “birdcage” construction planned when the legislation was before Parliament was abandoned five years ago as being impractical and failing to prevent damage to housing outside the approved area or to the West Coast Main Line.

Nor is there any clarity as to what will happen at Euston. HS2 Ltd. continue to harbour hopes of ten or eleven platforms, and a grade separated approach; the former Prime Minister reduced the scope to six platforms. Grade separation, whereby incoming trains do not conflict with those departing, takes more land than a flat junction. The Chancellor expressed the hope that her announcement would provide the catalyst for private development at Euston. It is doubtful whether this uncertainty will reduce the risk to a level which private developers might entertain.

The second announcement was for £485m. to Transport *for* London for its 2025/26 Capital programme. What this will cover is unclear. There were reports about the new trains on the Piccadilly line and the Elizabeth line, but those were supposed to be already committed and indeed the Piccadilly trains have been built (in Goole). The possibility of completing the resignalling of the sub-surface lines (Circle, District, Met, H & C), new trains for the Bakerloo line and signalling on the Piccadilly line are subject of speculation. However, the funding, which is less than the Mayor sought for 2024/25 when he received only £250m. is conditional on fares rising by 4.6% from next March. The extension of the Bakerloo, West London Orbital and DLR extension to Thamesmead seem to be some way down the track; and Crossrail2 and the pedestrian link from Euston to Euston Square (which HS2 would need if it brought more people into Euston) are still further aspirations.

The 4.6%, based on RPI when it was higher than it is now plus 1%, would at least allow the Mayor to restore the differentials eroded by his predecessor, who reduced the zone 1 peak fares when increasing those fares likely to be incurred by the least well-off.

5. Planning Issues

This is a general round up of sources and issues that individual members may want to use.

1. [‘They Work for You’](#) is useful for being informed of Parliamentary speeches, responses to questions and statements by various people and on specific subjects. The first of the attached documents consists of ones relevant to our work.
2. There are three additional items on the London Forum website in [News/Updates](#) and London Forum’s responses to the proposed changes to the NPPF are in [News/WhatWe’veSaid](#). In our Twitter feed into the website there is a re-post of Lucy Powell MP claiming what Labour has done in its First 100 days. There will be another one appearing on how the Thames Tideway Sewer Tunnel fails to eliminate river pollution in Putney. They are [here](#).
3. The weekly Government news update can be useful and we have extracted from it the following links.
 - [New ‘brownfield passports’ to seize the growth opportunities of urban areas](#)
As part of its brownfield first approach to development, the government has announced plans to support and expedite approval of urban sites, such as car parks.
 - [Measures to ensure decent homes for all](#)
The government will consult on a new Decent Homes Standard for the rented sectors.
 - [Chancellor unveils package to deliver promises of new government](#)
The Chancellor has unveiled a package of measures to deliver on the agenda of the new government.
 - [Prime Minister overhauls apprenticeships to support opportunity](#)
Reforms to apprenticeship system in England announced, alongside publication of first Skills England report highlighting nationwide skills gaps
 - [Stakeholder views help to shape planning improvements](#)
Feedback from stakeholders is helping to shape future improvements for the Planning Inspectorate and for the wider planning system.
 - [Transport Secretary pledges to fix pothole plague as she sees cutting-edge repair technology in action](#)
Government plans to fix up to one million more potholes a year and help halt the decline of the country’s road network.

4. The next London Plan, the implications for London of the DHCLG changes to the NPPF and associated guidance and the effect on London of the Government's new planning Bill.

The London Forum wrote to the GLA seeking clarification of these issues and received this response:

September 2024

On the Statement of Community Involvement, please note that we do not support the production of a Statement of Community Involvement per se and this has been our position throughout. A statement of community involvement sets out how a planning authority will engage with communities in fulfilling its statutory duties. The Mayor's role, and the role of the GLA, do not fall within this framework.

However, we are committed to helping improve engagement for communities with the wider planning system, ranging from specific development proposals to, crucially, policy and plan-making stages where the statutory frameworks that are used to decide individual planning applications are developed. The London Plan sets the standard for effective community involvement as the very first principle of Good Growth and the Planning for London Programme represents a step-change in both the breadth and depth of engagement.

The team did commit to preparing information to help communities navigate and understand what is undoubtedly a complicated system and will be looking to engage with community groups on this. We are also continuing to develop enhanced tools and data to support Londoners' involvement in planning. To date, the Mayor has embedded the use of PLANAPPS as a platform for engaging Londoners in his involvement in the development management process and has unlocked all of the spatial data contained in development plans across London through the Planning Data Map. These have both proved popular with Londoners and the usage of them increases month on month. The team continue to work on other ways to unlock data about how London is changing that can inform Londoners how best to be involved in shaping this.

As noted at the Planning for London sessions, we committed to re-engage on the London Plan development towards the end of 2024. There have been a number of significant events since that time including the general election in July (which had been mooted for November), which happened prior to publication of much of the secondary legislation needed to bring sections of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act into force, and the new government's publication of proposed amendments to national policy. These all impact on the programming of the London Plan, its supporting documents and the evidence base.

We are anticipating a statutory consultation on the Integrated Impact Assessment Scoping Report by the end of the year, hopefully in October and November. We are also expecting to go live with another round of informal engagement in early 2025 with a high level document.

For this reason, we have taken a different approach focussing on breadth and listening to as many people as possible, including those who do not normally engage with plan-making. As we go through this process, we expect to continue to apply this approach. The exception to this is engagement with London's planning authorities where we have committed to a 'no surprises' approach recognising their unique relationship to the London Plan in terms of it being part of their statutory development plan and 'general conformity' in plan-making. Whilst this approach is different from previously, we don't consider it to be lesser.

Lisa Fairmaner

*Head of the London Plan and Growth Strategies
Greater London Authority*

GLA Housing Committee Update

Darian Mitchell

Mayor's affordable homes delivery

This was an update on the affordable homes programme with everyone feeling more optimistic with the coming of a Labour government. The members first questioned the Mayor's team and then representatives from a housing association, London Councils, The Chartered Institute of Housing and the Borough of Ealing.

Background reminder: *The GLA strategic Market Housing Assessment in 2017 stated that London needed 42,841 affordable homes every year between 2016 and 2041, not all of which would be delivered by the Mayor. He has several current programmes and targets with different sources of funding, the largest being the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP). This meeting focused on the AHP. There are two overlapping AHP programmes, 2016-2023 of which the target was 116,000 starts which have been met. Completions are ongoing. The 2021-2026 programme encountered many external problems and delays which meant it didn't start building until 2023. The Mayor aims to deliver 60% of the 35,000 homes in this programme at social rent. He has asked for an extension to the timing. The Mayor has also announced two further targets for council housing. He wants councils to acquire 10,000 council homes in the next decade, some of which could be funded by the AHP, and to build 20,000 new council homes by 2030.*

Generally speaking, everyone thought that the targets could be met, but what everyone wanted was more flexibility which they are hopeful they will get from the new government. The GLA wants to be able to move away from shared ownership and towards intermediate rent. For example, the London Living Rent was set up to provide cheap rents for ten years so that tenants could save up to put deposits down for shared ownership. Tenants are coming to the end of their ten years and haven't managed to save up, but the housing associations want to hold on to them because they are good tenants. Shared ownership sales are falling and intermediate rental products are much

more popular. Everyone is clear that discounted market rents must be genuinely affordable, not 80% of market rents which would be much too expensive. The aim is to link a proportion of rents to key workers' salaries alongside those that are linked to average salaries. They are also asking for more flexibility in the grants the GLA is able to give to housing associations and councils. In the past there was a higher rate for councils at £100,000 per unit, in the future they want to see grants based on the viability and cost of the scheme. More flexibility won't result in more homes, only more overall funding will do that. In response to a question about speeding up the delivery of homes, Tom Copley said that they meet regularly with the deliverers of housing who have their own incentives to build as fast as possible and get the rents coming in.

Turning to Section 106, the developers are having problems selling their affordable housing. Registered providers don't have much money available to buy them and they are finding that the quality isn't good enough. The homes don't meet the needs of their prospective tenants and they are not sufficiently well built. Developers are being forced to accept less money for their affordable housing which means that the price of the market housing goes up. It is essential that developers, RPs and other stake holders get together before building starts so that developers don't get left with unsuitable unsold housing.

In response to a question about central government funding, the GLA have asked for £4.9 billion for the next programme and £2.2 billion extra to fill some short term shortfalls. It is not clear whether they will get this. The buying up of existing homes, mainly ex council, will be capped at 10% of all affordable homes. Of the 40,000 council homes to be built by 2030 many will already be underway and some will be funded solely by the council. There is a big discrepancy between boroughs in council house building and this is mainly politically driven, although some boroughs just don't have the space. GLA will not give money to boroughs who are not building council houses, and they will not subsidise developers.

The stakeholder organisations covered a lot of the ground covered by the GLA officers and they were mainly in agreement. However, they made a few additional points, Housing Associations needed increased capital grants so they could borrow money more easily. 693,000 homes could be built on public land, but this is not happening. Developers don't necessarily understand how RPS work, they have a business model which focuses on short term profits. The GLA could help with negotiations between developers and RPs using some of their grant funding to facilitate agreements. The current viability of housebuilding is affected by a multitude of problems alongside the reluctance of RPs to buy homes they cannot afford and whose quality is questionable. It costs £450,000 to build a new home, but housing associations can only offer £250-290,000. A pot of money that was available to rectify defects in new builds would give RPs more confidence in taking on the responsibility for some properties. The ability of a council to reinvestment 100% of the right to buy receipts, would be helpful, but won't raise much money in London, as council properties are beyond the means of council tenants.

Above all a longer term housing strategy is needed and a proper funding framework which includes a rent settlement – rents have been frozen for years which has caused real financial difficulties. A reallocation of capital funding is needed, for example money needs to be transferred from temporary accommodation to housebuilding. A home improvement strategy is also needed, an investment in ecological and decent homes. Working in partnership is the key to the delivery of the housing we need and just as important as more money.

Although in the London Forum we talk a lot about the need to give priority to council housing, for the GLA and partners intermediate rented accommodation is just as important.

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