

AI summary of Planning in London issue 135 Oct2025

The LP&DF meeting discussed urban planning challenges in London, focusing on housing delivery, the role of town architects, and the impact of policy on development.

The Role and Responsibilities of Town Architects

Town architects play a crucial role in urban planning and development.

- They are responsible for design oversight and quality control in projects.
- Their duties include community engagement and visioning for local areas.
- They initiate strategic placemaking initiatives to enhance public spaces.
- Town architects focus on building local planning capacity and promoting sustainable development.
- Advocacy for better planning practices is also a key responsibility.

Challenges in Housing Delivery in London

London faces significant challenges in meeting housing demands due to various systemic issues.

- There is a substantial deficit between housing targets and actual delivery.
- The private sector struggles to provide affordable housing due to unrealistic targets and complex viability assessments.
- The cost of living in London has risen, leading to school closures and an ageing population.
- The planning system prioritizes policy over flexible frameworks, hindering effective housing delivery.

Critique of Mayor Sadiq Khan's Performance

Mayor Khan's tenure has been criticized for failures in key areas affecting Londoners.

- His record on housing delivery is deemed inadequate, with little progress made.
- Transport initiatives have led to increased congestion and dissatisfaction among residents.
- The latest draft London Plan shows some improvement, but concerns remain about affordable housing policies.
- Critics argue that Khan's governance lacks vision and effective execution.

The Deterioration of Small Site Development

The decline in small site development has significant implications for London's housing supply.

- SME developers contributed 40% of housing supply 30 years ago, but this has dropped to around 12% today.
- There has been a 50% reduction in small site development in London from 2006 to 2016.
- Government initiatives like ENABLE Build loans aim to support smaller builders, but finance alone may not address the underlying issues.
- A lack of comprehensive data on small sites and developers hampers effective policy-making.

The Need for Planning Reform in London

Reforming the planning system is essential to encourage housing development in London.

- The current system is overly complex and burdensome, deterring private sector investment.
- Simplifying rules and reducing taxes could incentivize developers to invest in urban renewal.
- The public sector lacks the funds to build, necessitating a shift towards encouraging private investment.
- A focus on "brownfield first" development could help meet housing needs in desirable areas.