

# London planning news

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## Headline news

### Final version of Mayor of London's Affordable Housing and Viability SPG published

The Homes for Londoners Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been published by London Mayor Sadiq Khan; the SPG sets out the mayor's approach to increasing the levels of affordable housing, while also speeding up decisions in the planning system.

Some – but not all – details of what has changed as a result of responses to last year's draft version are provided in the Mayor's Affordable Housing & Viability SPG Consultation Summary, published alongside the Guidance itself and addressing points made by respondents. In particular, the threshold approach to viability and its two routes for applicants are explained in simpler terms, as a key example of revisions in the final version.

The SPG refers to how at least half the new homes built on public land in London will have to be affordable to benefit from faster planning permission.

Another key aspect of the SPG is the new 'threshold approach', whereby schemes meeting or exceeding 35 per cent affordable housing without public subsidy (or 50 per cent where on public land, without grant) can follow a new 'Fast Track Route'. The

document says that this route means that applicants:

'[...] are not required to submit viability information at the application stage, and applications are subject to review mechanisms

only if an agreed level of progress on implementation has not been achieved within two years of consent being granted or as agreed with the local planning authority.'

Overall, the guidance reinforces Khan's long-term aim for half of all new homes to be affordable, as explained in four distinct parts, covering:

- Increasing the amount of affordable housing delivered through the planning system;
- Viability assessment thresholds (35% without detailed viability information);
- A focus on using 'existing use value plus' (EUV+) for viability assessments; and
- Specific approaches on Build to Rent schemes.

For further information, please see Lichfields' blogs on: the details of the 'Homes for Londoners Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance 2017'; and the implications of using the EUV+ approach to viability assessments.

### Transport Secretary approves Barking Riverside Overground extension

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has made the London Overground (Barking Riverside Extension) Order (subject to modifications) and granted the application for deemed planning permission (subject to conditions), as applied for by Transport for London (TfL) and relating to a 4km extension of the London Overground network to Barking Riverside.

According to the decision (made in line with the Inspector's recommendations) issued on the Transport Secretary's behalf, the primary aim of the extension project is to provide new sustainable transport infrastructure to support economic development and population growth in the area. ▶▶

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



This investment [£1.7bn to build 50,000 affordable homes] will work hand-in-hand with the new approach for developers that I'm introducing today, which will allow them to benefit from a fast track through the planning system if they offer more affordable housing and get building quickly.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, launching the final version of the Affordable Housing and Viability SPG on 16 August 2017

## THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

The Mayor's finalised Affordable Housing and Viability SPG provides clear indications of how responses to the draft version have (in large part beneficially) influenced revisions – particularly in terms of increased clarity and elements of moderation introduced throughout the guidance.

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The Inspector had noted that the area 'is currently very isolated in transport terms and its development is therefore dependent upon provision of new public transport infrastructure'.

The decision also states that with the delivery of the extension scheme, the area will be capable of accommodating 10,800 homes aimed at a population of 27,000 and capable of providing 4,600 jobs.

## Mayor publishes 'Better Health for all Londoners'

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has published 'Better Health for all Londoners', his draft Health Inequality Strategy; the document aims to address the city's inequalities and work towards the improvement of all Londoners' health.

Announcing the publication, the Mayor openly condemned the stark disparity of health conditions in different London boroughs, as a new online map tool has also been released showing the wide inequality that affects parts of the capital.

Among the five priorities identified by the outline Strategy, 'Healthy Places' openly refers to planning matters, as it suggests the importance of working towards:

'[...] London having the best air quality of any major global city, making the capital's streets healthier, ensuring all Londoners have access to good-quality green space, tackling income inequality and fuel poverty, creating healthy workplaces, improving housing quality and affordability, and addressing homelessness and rough sleeping.'

The draft statutory Strategy is out for consultation until 30 November.

## London's Environment strategy published

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has unveiled proposals for his draft Environment Strategy, announcing plans to support making London the first National Park City.

To achieve this objective, the Mayor has openly referred to the need to use planning regulations 'to protect the Green Belt and incorporate into new developments more 'green roofs' [...],

green walls [...], 'rain gardens' [...], and habitats for wildlife'.

Overall, the statutory strategy aims to make London a 'greener, cleaner and healthier place by targeting London's toxic air, and making a zero-carbon city by 2050 with energy efficient buildings, clean transport and energy and increasing recycling'.

Furthermore, the Mayor has also launched a new £9m Greener City Fund for London aimed at creating and/or improving green spaces in the capital.

The draft statutory Environment Strategy is out for consultation until 17 November.

## Tourism Strategy published

London & Partners, the Mayor of London's official promotional agency, has published its vision for London's tourism industry to 2025.

The vision, developed with the support of more than 100 of London's tourism businesses, is based on a series of activities grouped in four main areas, these being:

- Pre-visit promotion;
- Visitor experience and information;
- Infrastructure and amenities; and
- Developing the infrastructure for business visits and events.

Of interest to planning, a 'recommendation for the industry' in relation to infrastructure and amenities stresses the importance of preserving London's cultural infrastructure, which is considered to be at risk, according to the document.

The Tourism Strategy supports the development of guidance for local authorities to encourage 'planning that supports cultural infrastructure', for example, to encourage new live/work spaces for artists as well as to protect the future of London's pubs, music and cultural venues.

## Plans to boost digital connectivity unveiled by London Mayor

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has unveiled a series of measures aimed at boosting digital connectivity in the capital and tackling areas of poor connectivity (so called 'not-spots').

On the latter, a new Not-Spot Team will visit London's most problematic connectivity spots (such as in Rotherhithe, and parts of Westminster and the City of London), with the intention being to support the local authorities and providers in identifying and delivering effective solutions to improve connectivity.

Other measures relate to the setting up of the Digital Connectivity Funding Forum, a City Hall summit that will bring together London local authorities with the aim of supporting them in their applications for the Government's Digital Infrastructure Fund, and the work that TfL is undertaking to bring mobile connectivity to London Underground tunnels.

The Mayor has also officially appointed Theo Blackwell as London's first Chief Digital Officer. His remit includes working closely with the Smart London Board to develop a new Smart London Plan, building collaborations across London's boroughs and businesses to expand the digital transformation of public services, as well as support the spreading of innovation through common technology standards and better data-sharing.

## Mayor invests in 'Pocket homes' for first-time buyers

Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, has announced a £25m investment deal (part of his Innovation Fund) to support the development of new factory-built affordable homes for first-time buyers; all the investment, which will be repaid in full by the end of the 2020s, is expected to support the financing of site purchases.

The Mayor's investment in Pocket Living will see the delivery of over 1,000 new homes by 2021; these homes, explicitly aimed at first-time buyers and typically one or two-bedroom flats, are sold at least 20% below market values, and are for local people who already rent in a Borough. Moreover, all the affordable homes secured through the investment are expected to remain affordable for the lifetime of the building. ■