

London planning news

OCTOBER 2017



Headline news

Draft Housing Strategy published

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has published his draft London Housing Strategy, which is out for consultation until 7 December. Alongside the main document, an executive summary, an easy-to-read version, and the impact assessment of the draft Strategy have also been published.

The Strategy is a statutory document which is expected to be finalised in 2018; it will also inform the new draft London Plan (expected November 2017) and is based on the following five themes:

- Building homes for Londoners;
- Delivering genuinely affordable homes;
- High quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods;
- A fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders; and
- Tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers.

The new draft Strategy closely resembles various parts of the previous Mayor's Housing Strategy (2014), particularly concerning requests for further devolution of powers from the UK Government and additional resources. In advance of the Housing Strategy's publication, the Mayor also warned of the need for further devolution from central Government, as he highlighted the results of

research that revealed that the level of stamp duty paid on homes in London had soared, yet investment in affordable housing has fallen.

Sadiq Khan has also announced that City Hall is earmarking an initial £250m for buying and

preparing land for new affordable housing. The Mayor said:

'I will use my powers and resources to their fullest extent, but Government needs to play its part too by giving London the powers and resources we need to see an even greater step-change in the number of homes being built.'

Lichfields Think Tank has produced a brief blog and a summary table which cover the main proposals included in the 200-page plus draft Housing Strategy; this Think Tank blog explains how the guidance in the recently published Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance priorities a shift in land valuation methodology and how it will form a pillar of the new London Plan's housing policies.

Mayor calls for council tax increase on empty homes

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has called on the Government to allow London Boroughs to charge higher council tax for high-value homes that are left empty.

Sadiq Khan's request came as a report he commissioned last year on the role of overseas investment in the London's property market has shown that the number of properties left entirely empty was very low overall, with a greater proportion of empty homes in prime locations.

The Mayor has now written to the Government, asking for powers to allow the boroughs to charge council tax levy on high-value empty properties at a rate above the current 50% allowed.

Privately-owned public spaces need new London Plan rules

The London Assembly has agreed a motion urging Mayor of London Sadiq Khan to show a higher degree of transparency and accountability in the next London Plan in ►►

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



From £250m to kick-start my plans to secure more land for new and affordable homes, to a new model and fairer deal for millions of private renters [...] I will use my powers and resources to their fullest extent, but Government needs to play its part too by giving London the powers and resources we need to see an even greater step-change in the number of homes being built.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, launching his draft Housing Strategy

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

The Mayor's draft London Housing Strategy builds upon his guidance on affordable housing and viability, effectively taking its direction for development forward into the policies of the new London Plan. The Mayor's solutions for housing development are clear: ensuring that more land is brought forward, more quickly and cheaply, to help developers to build homes (and more affordable homes) quicker; and capturing additional value from the landowner in order to fulfil ambitious planning obligations.

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relation to the allocation of public spaces to the public sector.

The decision came as the number of public spaces owned by private companies in London is apparently increasing, as reported by some newspapers. The Assembly noted that current legislation that allows landowners to decide who has public access to these spaces are 'an unusual planning rule which should be revised'.

Mayor calls for increase in UK infrastructure investment

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has called on the Government to increase its infrastructure spending across the UK; the call came as the Mayor met the Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, Lord Andrew Adonis.

The Mayor stressed that all parts of the UK need to see an increase in infrastructure and transport investments from Government, as these are crucial for the creation of jobs and for the future growth of the Country outside the EU.

The Mayor of London said:

'We cannot afford for new infrastructure investment in any one region to be seen as a zero-sum game - if Britain's economy is to succeed we need to see increased investment across the country. I will continue to provide any technical or political support I can to other mayors and local authorities across the UK in order to develop infrastructure plans in their areas.'

Kensington and Chelsea consults on office-to-residential Article 4

The London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has launched a consultation on a non-immediate borough-wide Article 4 Direction aimed at removing the office to residential permitted development right (PDR).

The decision has been made as a consequence of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2016, which introduced rules meaning that from 31 May 2019, London borough exemptions that were allowed in 2013 (when the PDR was first introduced) will be removed. Kensington and Chelsea was successful in securing

such an exemption back in 2013, and is now looking to ensure that planning permission will continue to be required in the Borough for such changes of use and maintain the status quo.

A report commissioned by the Council to estimate the likely impact of not having an Article 4 Direction in force in the Borough has shown that 3,500 firms were potentially at 'significant risk of having their current premises converted from their current commercial use into residential dwellings', while 44,000 jobs were considered at risk.

The consultation closes on 24 October.

'High Streets for All' report published

A study that looks into the high streets of London and particularly focuses on their social value from the perspective of their communities has been published by the Greater London Authority (GLA); as specified in the introduction to the study, findings from the report 'will inform updates of Mayoral strategies including the review of the London Plan, the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy.

'High Streets for All', authored by LSE Cities and We Made That, uses evidence gathered from existing knowledge and new primary research to make the case for advocacy, intervention and investment in London's high streets. In particular, the report explores London's 602 high streets, identifies 18 drivers of social value, details 10 key findings and then makes 10 key recommendations.

Assembly Environment Committee report on London's waste

The London Assembly Environment Committee has published a report which looks at how a circular economy could provide innovative solutions to the problem of unsustainable waste management, while strengthening London's economy at the same time.

Waste: The Circular Economy has found that the adoption of a circular model for London's waste could possibly: lead to a 60% reduction in overall waste by 2041; support the move towards

carbon-neutrality in London; create 12,000 new jobs by 2030; and provide £7bn of additional net benefit to London's economy.

Assembly Housing Committee report highlights extent of hidden homelessness problem

The London Assembly Housing Committee has published a report on homelessness which estimates that there are thirteen times more hidden homeless people in London than those officially recognised (i.e. those sleeping rough).

'Hidden homelessness in London' provides recommendations to both the Government and the Mayor on how to address such issues, including the Government providing sufficient financial support to London Boroughs, to ensure the effective implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Mayor unveils plans for new cycle superhighways

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has announced plans for two new cycle superhighways in West and South East London.

Cycle Superhighway 9 will include almost 6km of segregated track which will link Kensington Olympia to Brentford; plans will also include five new traffic light crossings and more than 20 upgraded pedestrian crossings.

Cycle Superhighway 4 will connect Tower Bridge to Greenwich, providing more than 4km of segregated tracks; the route has been chosen due to the high demand for cycling already existing in the area (3,550 daily trips), and the related need for safety improvements (93 collisions involving cyclists happened on this section of the A200 in the last three years).

The consultation for Cycle Superhighway 9 closes on 31 October, while that for Cycle Superhighway 4 ends on 19 November. Transport for London and its partners intend to start building both Cycle Superhighways 'late next year'. ■