

# MAYOR OF LONDON

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Dear Raji,

## London Housing Panel


Thank you for the London Housing Panel's *Our priorities for the Mayor* report and for the work you and the Panel have undertaken over the past year.

In working with Trust for London to establish the London Housing Panel last year, I wanted to build on the community engagement work my housing team and others at City Hall had undertaken to inform the London Housing Strategy and other key policy work, to ensure that the voluntary and community sector continues to inform the development of my housing policies. The Panel's report rightly emphasises the value of including community voices in policy making, as I believe the Panel is doing, and is in itself an important contribution to the housing policy agenda in London. I welcome the three themes set out in the report, which align with my housing priorities as Mayor, and I have outlined my response to each theme in the attachment to this letter. I look forward to seeing the results of the work between my team and the Panel on these issues over the coming year.

I also have the pleasure of confirming that the Greater London Authority (GLA) will be providing funding to Trust for London for the London Housing Panel for another twelve months after the current period ends, up until 31 July 2021. I look forward to seeing the results of the Panel's work with my team on the priorities you have identified.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication to the work of the Panel as Chair. You have laid the foundations for a positive and productive working relationship between the Panel and the GLA and I have greatly valued your contributions to the Homes for Londoners Board. I wish you all the best in your new role.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London

Cc: Susie Dye, Grants Manager, Trust for London

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## Appendix 1: Mayoral response to London Housing Panel's *Our priorities for the Mayor* report

### 1. Massively increase social housing supply

- *Calculate the number of social rented homes needed to address the crisis now and to future proof housing supply. Civil society groups and organisations have made their own assessments; we should all work together to lobby for adequate funding to meet these.*
- *Back the campaign that is calling for public land to be put to public use through social house building, not sold to build unaffordable private homes.*
- *Ensure transparency of data that tracks the number of social rented homes built, including those built on public land, and how these homes are distributed.*
- *Exert influence over London boroughs to set aspirational and specific targets for homes for social rent; and to make available small sites for community-led housing development.*
- *Ensure transparency of viability assessment in order for communities to be able to hold boroughs to account for these targets.*

Since I took office, I have used my funding and planning powers to deliver record numbers of social rented and other genuinely affordable homes. I am proud that last year over 17,000 of these homes were started in London, including more than 7,000 homes at social rent levels.

However, I agree with the Panel that many more social rented homes need to be delivered if we are to truly tackle the housing crisis – the GLA's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has identified a need for 66,000 additional homes per year to meet London's housing needs, of which just under half should be for low-cost rent. My Housing Strategy and London Plan (Intend to Publish version) aim to reflect the diverse housing needs of Londoners and include policies to address these needs. For example, my London Plan includes policies to address the need for specialist and supported accommodation, including older persons' housing and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, and sets a requirement for councils to provide guidance on the size mix of low-cost homes. My dedicated funding programmes for community-led and supported and specialist housing support the supply of new and remodelled accommodation to meet specific needs, especially those of vulnerable Londoners.

I agree that it is important that we are clear on the scale of need for genuinely affordable homes in London, in particular, social rented homes – a significant increase in Government funding is required in order to deliver the homes required to meet Londoners' needs. Last year my team published analysis which showed that £4.9bn per year would be required to build 32,500 affordable homes in London each year, with 70 per cent of these being social rented homes<sup>1</sup>. I look forward to engaging with the Panel on how we can continue to make use of this and other work to make the case to the Government for a step-change in investment levels for housing delivery in London.

The Panel's report also highlights the importance of delivering affordable homes on public land and I agree that more needs to be done to ensure that public land is able to support the highest possible levels of affordable housing delivery. That is why I am asking the Government to review the rules on the sale of public land to promote increased affordable housing delivery, and for more funding to enable the GLA to acquire surplus Government landholdings in London for housing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/increasing-housing-supply/2022-2032-affordable-housing-funding-requirement-london>

# MAYOR OF LONDON

development. I call on the Government to give the GLA the right of first refusal over public land sales in London, as Homes England does outside of London.

While I do not have the power to mandate that all public land is used solely to deliver affordable housing, I have made significant steps to drive up the number of affordable homes built on this land, with an expectation that at least 50 per cent of homes built on public land should be affordable in order to qualify for the Fast Track Route set out in Policy H5 of my London Plan (Intend to Publish version). I have used my Land Fund to support much higher levels of affordable housing on several sites than otherwise would have been the case. This includes the former Holloway Prison site where my Land Fund is supporting the delivery of over 900 new homes, of which 60 per cent will be genuinely affordable. In addition, the purchase of the St Ann's Hospital site by the GLA has significantly increased the level of affordable homes from 14 per cent to over 800 homes and a minimum of 60 per cent of them will be affordable.

I acknowledge the Panel's desire to see disaggregated data on the number of social rent and other genuinely affordable homes delivered in London. While reporting processes for the current Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) do not fully allow for this, I will review this when making plans for the new AHP and look forward to engaging with the Panel further on this issue. In terms of sharing information on who lives in social housing once it is built, my team would be happy to discuss at one of your next meetings the work they have done on this issue to date.

The Panel's report also sets out an ask for all boroughs to have local targets for the delivery of social rented housing. Policy H6 in my London Plan requires that 30 per cent of each borough's overall affordable housing offer to be for low-cost rent, with 30 per cent intermediate and the remaining 40 per cent to be determined by the borough through their development plans. However, the Plan notes that there is a presumption that this 40 per cent will focus on homes for low-cost rent given the level of need for the types of homes across London. I am also supportive of councils which show commitment to building affordable homes by announcing delivery targets of their own, many of which focus on social rented homes.

I agree that transparency in decision making is important and that is why my London Plan promotes such an approach, including monitoring requirements on affordable housing delivery (policy H7). I have also established a more transparent approach to viability testing as set in my Affordable Housing Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). I believe that viability information relevant to planning decisions should be publicly available alongside other application documents in order to foster greater trust in the planning system. That is why I have encouraged and supported boroughs to adopt this approach, the majority of which now have their own transparency arrangements in place. I am always open to hearing suggestions for how I can further support transparency in this process, within the limits of my powers, so my team would be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## 2. Support all Londoners to be heard and thrive

- *Embed listening structures in the GLA with a focus on Housing and Land, and Planning, so that all people with housing needs – whether they are homeless, temporarily or vulnerably housed or in stable accommodation – are heard.*
- *Proactively include those whose experiences are least likely to be taken into account, including children and young people, LGBT+ people and older people, migrants, disabled people, women fleeing violence and people who are homeless, Gypsy and Traveller communities, and involve them in ways that are accessible and suitable for them.*
- *Require evidence of listening to Londoners in applications for planning and affordable housing fund applications; and add enforcement and scrutiny of this request to the remit of senior GLA personnel.*
- *Require that the Mayor's Annual Equality Report set out where Londoners have been listened to and what was done with the views they expressed; and that this is reviewed annually by the Homes for Londoners board.*
- *Require an equalities impact statement in applications for affordable housing funding, showing how they address specialist accommodation needs and add enforcement and scrutiny of this request to the remit of senior GLA personnel.*

Ensuring that the voices of diverse communities are at the heart of policy making is key to my vision to create a fairer, more equal city. I am proud of the work that I have done as Mayor to engage with communities and ensure that my housing policy reflects Londoners' needs. The London Housing Panel plays a key role in this, as its members represent a range of diverse views and groups from across London. Since taking office I have implemented a new London Housing Strategy which was informed by a wide-ranging consultation with contributions from a range of stakeholders, including individual Londoners and the voluntary and community sector, reflecting the rich diversity of our city. My officers continue to engage with London's diverse communities to ensure that our policies and programmes are contributing towards addressing London's housing needs and I see my team's engagement with the Panel as a key part of this work.

My London Plan (Intend to Publish version) underwent a comprehensive consultation process and Examination in Public and I am pleased that Panel members contributed to these discussions. I agree that the planning system must be a means by which Londoners are able to make their views on developments heard and I would be interested to hear the Panel's thoughts on how community voices in planning could be strengthened further.

The London Housing Strategy and London Plan set out the framework for my approach addressing the significant housing need which exists in the capital, and both documents were subject to equalities impact assessments. My AHP is the route through which I invest in genuinely affordable homes in London, and the design of the programme aims to meet housing need in London as far as restrictions on central Government funding allow. In addition, AHP contracts require that housing providers have due regard to all relevant equalities legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equalities Duty, and have an equalities policy in place.

In my statutory Mayor's Annual Equality Report (MAER), I outline how my policies and programmes, including my AHP, are contributing towards my objectives for addressing long-standing inequalities and discrimination, as outlined in Inclusive London, my Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy. In terms of how my AHP addresses specialist accommodation needs, I set out in my London Housing

# MAYOR OF LONDON

Strategy my aim to support the delivery of 2,000 specialist homes for older and vulnerable people, and capacity to accommodate around 800 people who are moving on from homelessness hostels and refuges for victims of domestic abuse. I will continue to ensure that AHP processes and priorities are used to maximise the delivery of specialist housing across London, and that the Homes for Londoners Board is updated on progress in this area.

My Homes for Londoners team is working to ensure that community voices are reflected in different aspects of its work and I am pleased that over the past year the London Housing Panel has had increasing involvement in the work of this team. Across the wider GLA, my dedicated community engagement, social integration and equalities and fairness teams are an integral resource that ensures that all my policies and programmes are informed by considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion and reflect Londoners' needs. The work of these teams is reflected in Inclusive London and they are supported by my Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (made up of expert representatives from equalities groups and civil society), who review the actions I have taken each year, as detailed in the MAER. I welcome the Panel's continued engagement with these teams.

Community engagement will be particularly important as we move into recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and I am pleased that the Panel is already engaged in London-wide recovery work, including through the Housing Delivery Taskforce and contributions to the GLA's Community Response Survey. As we move forward with this work it is my commitment that we will continue to engage communities and work in partnership to deliver a recovery that is just, fair and people-focused, and I have asked my team to ensure that the Panel is closely involved in this work.

### **3. Action on temporary accommodation**

- *Set up a commission, with London boroughs, to find solutions to London's temporary accommodation crisis, and ensure that this includes the voices of those who have experienced homelessness and temporary accommodation.*
- *Work with London boroughs to develop pan-London quality standards in the use of temporary accommodation, including accommodation provided by the private rented sector, B&Bs, hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation provision.*
- *Use the London Model of the private rented sector to continue to lobby national government for more powers, but ensure this blueprint has consideration for those living in temporary accommodation.*
- *Take a stand against the use of conversions carried out under 'permitted development rights' and work with councils to discourage and enforce against developments that do not meet space, environmental and safety standards.*

I welcome the Panel's focus on temporary accommodation and recognise there are significant challenges in this area. The procurement and management of temporary accommodation sits outside of my direct control as Mayor, and instead is the legal responsibility of the boroughs. However, the issues that have led to the current situation, in particular, the chronic shortage of social rented homes, failure to reform the private rented sector (PRS) and changes to the welfare system over the last ten years, mean that boroughs are often put in difficult situations when trying to fulfil their duties to homeless families within the constraints placed upon them by the Government. Without the significant and sustained investment in social rented homes, adoption of my London Model of PRS reform and fundamental changes to the welfare system that are so desperately needed, there are unfortunately no quick fixes for the issues with temporary

# MAYOR OF LONDON

accommodation. Despite this, my team looks forward to engaging with the Panel to identify how you can work together on this priority over the coming year, whether through a commission or another means.

I agree that too many Londoners in temporary accommodation are living in substandard conditions and that is why I have provided funding and support for several initiatives to improve the standard and quality of temporary accommodation in London. This includes the Pan-London Accommodation Collaborative Enterprise (PLACE), Setting the Standard and Capital Letters. My team is happy to provide an update on these initiatives at a future Panel meeting should this be of interest to the members. My team would also be happy to provide further detail on and discuss the aspects of the London Model that are relevant for temporary accommodation.

I also recognise that too often temporary accommodation can be created through permitted development rights, which can result in substandard accommodation that does not meet the high standards I expect of housing, as set out in my London Plan (Intend to Publish version). I have called for powers over permitted development rights to be devolved to London or, in the absence of this happening, these powers being removed altogether.