

**London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee –
Tuesday 28 November 2023**

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Accessibility and Planning – Panel 2

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Welcome back to those watching the Planning and Regeneration Committee. I am now moving us into the afternoon and the second panel. As mentioned, this is the second part of our session on accessibility and planning. For the guests who have now joined the meeting, I will repeat what I said at the start. This meeting is being live captioned by palantypists at MyClearText. We ask where possible for speakers to not talk over each other or to speak too quickly and that the use of jargon is kept to a minimum and any acronyms are explained in order for the meeting to be captioned with as few errors as possible and, also, the same advice for Committee Members.

A warm welcome to our second panel of guests. We are joined by Jules Pipe CBE, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills, and also Lisa Fairmaner, Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy for the Greater London Authority (GLA). Once again for the purpose of live captioning, can guests introduce themselves when they are speaking for the first time. Thank you very much to you both.

Lisa, I know you were sitting in the public gallery during the first panel. We, as you saw, had a really rich and excellent panel of experts who gave us so much food for thought that we are hoping to if not immediately integrate into our questions now to you and Jules, certainly be following up in our output in order to make sure we capture accurately what they brought to the table.

We will start off with the first question, which is quite broad, to you both. Can you outline what the Planning for London Programme is and when and how Londoners can feed into it? Secondly, could you let us know when you envisage a review of the London Plan to take place? Please be as accurate as possible with the timeline on that.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Thank you, everyone. The Planning for London Programme is a set of engagement series to inform the next London Plan, whether that be a review or whether that be a whole new London Plan. That actual process will take place after the Mayoral election in May next year [2024]. This was an opportunity to speak to a wide range of Londoners through a range of different channels and get that really early, high-level discussion and engagement. Before we start looking at things like specific text or specific policy, there is an opportunity to talk to Londoners about London, about what their vision for the future would be and about impacts on their lives in a far more strategic and open way. We have built up a huge body of information and we will take that forward next year. We intend to publish that just before we go into pre-election next year. Some of it is available now but the rest of it we hope to publish before pre-election next year.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you. That was really helpful. Just a little bit more on that, then. How does the Planning for London Programme - and you will be publishing the fundings just before pre-election - interact with the wider timetable for the London Plan review?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): After the Mayoral election, we will then be in a position to look at what changes might be appropriate to the London Plan quite specifically. That would need to go through a full set of statutory consultation including with our borough colleagues. We would also hope for more iterative conversations rather than one big hit. We obviously need to go through the Examination in Public process and also submission to the Secretary of State and any actions that arise from that.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Fantastic. And a ballpark figure on the timeline of that?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): We think that a review would take one to two years, certainly well over one but at least two, and then for a whole new [London] Plan we are really talking three to four years. At a national level, there is a requirement to review your Plan every five years and so we are already in that five-year cycle, having adopted the plan in March 2021.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Brilliant. Just finally, significant further contributions to, for instance, the Planning for London Programme, if they happen in late January or February [2024], as the Committee is hoping to offer a significant submission, would that still be able to be captured even if it is after the publication date?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Yes. Absolutely. You are the Committee and so that is really critical to us, and we would take your advice, et cetera, thoughts and recommendations at any point and so there are obviously no timescales. We probably would not write them up as part of the overall bundle. What we will be doing is shutting down the engagement programme at the end of December [2023] to give us an opportunity to write things up. We will write them up separately for each event or each channel that we undertake, but we will also try to assimilate that together into a single body of both priorities and also areas where there is some really obvious divergence, perhaps, where people from different communities or different groups think quite differently about each other. We are trying to capture both points of difference and tension. The purpose of the Planning for London Programme has never been to find a single solution. It is to hear people's views and the breadth of those views.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Lisa, this is probably a conversation we will take offline. I do not want to pre-empt too much wider feedback, but I feel the wrapping up of the review by the end of December [2023] might be too soon. I wonder whether there was scope to have a part two or have it reopened post-election. One of the things, for instance, we have just heard from the panel before is that they think there is a variety of equalities groups that are yet to be engaged with even though the engagement that has been done so far, I can see, even from outside, has been really vibrant. We have had direct feedback this morning from groups about equality groups not necessarily even knowing that the review is taking place. I can speak further to that by having recently been part of specific stakeholder roundtables regarding the London Plan feeling like they would like a little bit more time.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes. We should not get too hung up on a cut-off date for them writing reports about the Planning for London Programme. This is like the first kick-off of the process and anything that the Committee produces right up to the point of formulating policy in 2025, 2026 or whenever is absolutely germane to the process. It is a bit artificial to get too hung up on that.

The second thing is I would just add to what Lisa said. What she said highlights the nature of the formulation of the London Plan. I hope I am not insulting any planners here, but a lot of the time, planners are not formulating policy. The policies are being driven by transport, policy specialists, housing specialists, environment specialists, and then today we are discussing accessible design, which will have its own advocates and specialists, who are not planners. The job of the London Plan is to find some sort of balance between the competing priorities because a lot of those priorities do compete and conflict. The art of the London Plan is bringing forward a document that is coherent, balances those conflicting policies and is viable in the sense of being affordable to build out. Yes, that was well described.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): That is a really helpful clarification. I guess it was not so much getting hung up on the date if the recommendations, whether it is this Committee's or other groups', will continue to be integrated. However, for me, December [2023] is probably the point when active outreach is maybe coming to an end, whereas the more statutory forms of wider conversations next year for the London Plan are more people coming to the table. I just wanted to keep one eye on the fact that there are probably still a variety of groups that will require active outreach from our side beyond December.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Sorry. Absolutely. We have always called this phase one. This is the opportunity we have had pre-election. Even at the event yesterday, I had a conversation at one of the tables saying, "In the hours that we have here with you today, we can only just touch the surface". Inclusion, even beyond accessibility is such a huge issue. We discussed how we want to have drill-down sessions focusing on each of the different protected characteristic groups and looking at intersectionality in turn, because we just did not have enough time yesterday, even in the opportunity that we did create.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you. That is really helpful. I will probably move us on to the next question now. As I do that, I will maybe integrate one piece of feedback we also had from one of our panellists who was at the session yesterday saying more broadly that perhaps accessibility and inclusive design is something that should be an agenda item for every agenda for each of the sessions rather than one specific panel so that it is integrated. Assembly Member Berry, you wanted to come in?

Siân Berry AM: Just very quickly on what Lisa said about releasing a lot of data immediately pre-election, is there any scope for releasing things a bit more in stages as you go along? I am speaking as a former Mayoral candidate. I am not this time and so I do not have a direct conflict of interest, but it is very useful when the GLA does engage and give information to all the Mayoral candidates who might be developing policy and then, conversely, Mayoral candidates will be announcing policy. When you are doing data collection, will you be modifying some of that so that potential new Mayors might also have information that will guide whether they actually implement those policies?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): The deliberative events are already available; they are on our website. As soon as we have anything cleared and ready to do, we put it straight up. We would not wait until that last moment, but our own deadlines give us time be committed to have published every single element. For example, the co-design work we did with the London Housing Panel was mentioned earlier today. For that piece of work, we are in the process of reaching the final stages of writing that up. As soon as it is ready, it will go in the public domain.

Siân Berry AM: OK. Brilliant. Thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Just on to my final question before I pass on to the other Committee Members. One thing that the panel was also making quite clear was in that the London Plan good intentions are really clear. Particularly [London Plan] Policy D5 [Inclusive Design], for instance, really does push inclusive design in the right direction, particularly at preapplication stage. What they found is perhaps, by the time that development is made, that is when the muscle has worn down. How do we bulk up the muscle throughout the development process to ensure that by the time the development is built, it is as inclusive as it was when it was signed off on.

To that end, the question I wanted to ask you both is how the current London Plan specifically ensures the principles of inclusive design are implemented in new developments across the city? Are there areas of improvement that you think that we could look to for the next London Plan?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): In addition to the Plan itself, there is the guidance. It is not often that I am confronted with anyone demanding more than 500 pages to the London Plan. It is interesting when you do get to that stage when people are asking for more detail, but it is the detail. It is not the fact that policies are wrong; it is the fact that they want more detail. Of course, there is London Plan guidance. There has been specifically design guidance that has been brought out since the Plan, plus there is currently recently published guidance and recently published guidance for consultation and more guidance to come. I am thinking of things like the purpose-built student accommodation and co-living accommodation. Those pieces of guidance touch on accessibility and add detail to the requirements from those types of dwelling, which speaks to that demand for more detail than there is in the London Plan.

Obviously, with the length of time it takes to produce a London Plan, it is easily foreseeable that demand expectation is always in advance of policy. Sometimes practice even comes in advance of policy and we are playing catchup and that is why it is an iterative process. What is not in the Plan or in guidance, by the time we come to do the Plan we would be seeking to meet the expectations, some of which you have heard today. I do not know if Lisa wants to add to that.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): That was good.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): That was really well said and that was one of the things that -- please.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Sorry, can I just add one thing, though? In addition and touching perhaps more directly on your question about the implementation, that is something we are going to have to look at. We are in a better position than we were in as much as we now have the [Planning]Datahub. Before, it was a bit of ad hoc reporting and sometimes perhaps it was a bit of wishful thinking, some of what was reported to the GLA in the figures, whereas now we both get self-certified data from the applicant and then we get a copy of the section 106 [of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)] to be able to ensure that what has been permissioned is in line with expectation.

It is quite obvious that there is still potentially a gap there, though. We will not ever have the resources to enforce and check ourselves. However, that does leave a question about what process there does have to be, particularly if boroughs are under-resourced and facing difficulties in terms of resourcing their Planning departments. We hear about that all the time and that is a question that we need to take forward. That is not so much a Plan question. That is a resources-of-the-planning-system-in-the-country question.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): OK. That was really helpful, Jules. Thank you. Assembly Member Berry is going to come on to talk about data specifically, but I appreciate you also mapping out how we might follow the process more thoroughly from beginning to end.

Just the final point I will make before I hand over is that one of the panellists did sort of say that as well, which is best practice does develop and in this particular area is developing quite quickly. There were a lot of examples that were teased out in the first part of the panel that we will be writing up and sending to you. I am hoping that we can see what can be learned from that. Assembly Member Berry?

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much. Starting with some good news and things that you want to tell us about; can you give us some examples of successful projects that have effectively incorporated inclusive design principles as outlined in the Plan? I know the previous panel gave us some examples. If you have got any more, that would be excellent.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Sorry. I have not come armed with examples. I am happy to write, though, with some examples that the team think that they have considered are good examples.

Siân Berry AM: That would be really great. Thank you.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Is there a particular size? Is it commercial development? Housing development? Which?

Siân Berry AM: I am coming on to that, actually, because, yes, there were some comments made in the previous panel around Inner and Outer London, the Central Activity Zone, attractions there being very good. The examples they gave us were of attractions that have engaged really well and have provided really good stuff. Then comments were made that potentially, in Outer London or smaller venues or smaller businesses, it may not be as good in terms of examples. They did not give us any examples of smaller developments --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Bigger ones not smaller ones, did you say?

Siân Berry AM: The ones they gave us were quite large and quite attraction based.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes. We can definitely come back with one specifically that the Mayor [of London] has funded on the Good Growth by Design. We have about 70 projects. A good chunk of those are small-build projects and inclusivity would have been absolutely at the heart of what they were trying to deliver.

Off the top of my head, I am thinking of the National Youth Theatre refurb that we funded in Islington that ended up having a Changing Places toilet in it. It is certainly not a large development, which is what is normally thought of as a development suitable for requiring that, but that project delivered that. There will be a whole list of small ones we can point to that the Mayor has funded. I am sure there are many others across London. There are some big ones; there are things like the public realm one. The Strand public realm transformation that has gone on is probably one of them I would quote.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I was just going to note as well Jules mentioned the London Plan guidance. The next piece of London Plan guidance, the first one out of the blocks after the Mayoral elections, we hope to be the accessible one. Although there has been mention within the housing standards and within other specialist housing, we want to make sure that there is a complete piece, and all those gaps are filled in.

The first element of that as part of the Good Growth by Design work is we have been doing a series through the lens of lived experience and, within that, those are qualitative case studies to try to build a picture of the barriers in the built environment. That engagement has included online workshops, sounding boards and one-to-one interviews. We have established a strong network of disabled Londoners contributing to this work. Thirty-plus of them have been engaged as paid workshop participants. That is the first piece: to start to build exactly what you are speaking to, which is what best practice is and what that looks like. Ultimately, that piece will go on to help inform what the London Plan guidance says.

Siân Berry AM: OK. Thank you very much. Moving on to housing more specifically, how do you feel that the London Plan is currently ensuring that new housing developments meet the needs of disabled people properly and contribute to independent living?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Lisa is probably best placed to talk to this because it is quite technical about the three basic standards and building regs, which lie outside my area. Building Regulations also lie outside Lisa's.

I know that, again, this is a kind of quite contested area about what is possible under different bits of legislation and what is responsible for it. I mentioned Building Regulations but also the National Policy Planning Framework as well does apply constraints about what we can demand from private developers in terms of wheelchair-accessible dwellings, for example, or at least adaptable dwellings. Delivery as a result in private dwellings is woeful, but it is quite explainable why that is when you look at the constraints. It does not justify it but, when you look at what the constraints are, you can see why it ends up where it does. Clearly, there is a better story to tell in the public sector, where there are direct allocations and proper plans can be made, but Lisa is probably better positioned.

Sorry, before you do, there is the ten per cent requirement for adaptable that we have in place. Clearly, there will be a discussion at some point about whether that is the right figure or not. That is going to have to be done. Should it be higher? Yes. Could it be higher? Yes. Could it be higher going through a London Plan and being reviewed in terms of viability and what it does to viability and what it does to competing policy requirements? For every three or four flats that were made adaptable, crucially, that means they are going to be significantly bigger. I would say for every three or four adaptable flats, that is probably equivalent to losing one unit of affordable housing. There will be those kinds of trade-offs, coming back to my opening remarks about balancing policy, that would have to be considered.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I was going to say there are two things we are quite cognisant of at the moment. One is that because we have a live data feed now through the Planning Datahub, the information that is coming back to us demonstrates a real issue because it is the information that is submitted with the planning applications by the applicant. It is coming through the live data feed, and we are just looking at the numbers and going, "I'm sorry. What? That in no way reflects what we would have expected to see with 90 per cent of it meeting the M4(2) [accessible and adaptable dwellings the in Building Regulations Approved Document M- Access to and use of buildings].

standard and then the other ten per cent meeting the M4(3) [wheelchair user dwellings the in Building Regulations Approved Document M– Access to and use of buildings]. There is a gap there that we need to unpin, and we are in the process of trying to understand. Is that poor data management and record keeping or is there a real issue in that all boroughs are falling short of delivering the homes that they need to be delivering? We are working on that.

The second element is the point about wheelchair-accessible or adaptable housing and recognising that it is only within the public sector that we require fully wheelchair accessible, which means there is a gap that is opening up within the market sector for people who want to purchase a home that is suitable to meet their needs. We are looking at that. That is something for the next London Plan because it is very clearly laid out within the London Plan and so no guidance can change that, but it is very clear.

The other thing that we are very aware of at the moment, in part due to the lived experience of somebody within our team, is the categorisation of units and people being able to access them. Although there might be a home that is wheelchair accessible, it is not marketed as such within the market sector. The best way, as I understand, to find the right homes would be just to search for “wet room” as opposed to searching for “accessible home”. That means that people are not able to find the accommodation they are looking to buy. We know that we do secure some through planning applications, but there is a gap between that and the information that real estate agents have.

Siân Berry AM: There is a lot there. Just a couple of follow-ups. Am I right that you are effectively saying that Government guidance means you cannot specify between the two different subcategories within the M4(3) standard? You cannot say, “We need more things delivered that are wheelchair accessible rather than adaptable”?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): At the moment, the London Plan in Policy D7 [Accessible Housing] is really clear. It says that you only require the full within the social-rented sector where you have nominations so that you can make sure that the adaptations that have been put into the home are suitable for the user of the home. We do believe in the team that that is something we want to look again at and seeing whether or not, particularly within the market sector, something more can be done because the cost of that fit out for somebody purchasing a home can be quite significant. That is falling between the cracks at the moment.

Siân Berry AM: I am assuming you watched earlier on when we heard about some ideas from Jane [Wilmot OBE, Chair, Hammersmith and Fulham Inclusive Design Review Panel] that the requirements for marketing ought to be changed because disabled people are not going to buy a home off plan on trust that it is going to turn out right for them. They want to see the ...

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Yes, absolutely. However, also, even beyond that, if we secure something through a planning application or a local planning authority (LPA), there must be a mechanism for some wording that is used so that everybody understands exactly what standard of accommodation you are going to get from that. That is quite important for people to be able to find the home they want.

Siân Berry AM: Great. Thank you. Going back to the data issue, I have been looking at the dashboard that is provided that is linked through from the London Plan Monitoring Report for accessible homes that are being delivered. You are right. In the overall numbers that are showing there, I am just looking at the approvals, not

the completions, and I have got an issue because the completions data appears to be the same and there is a note within the planning data hub that says essentially, “We are taking on trust that what is approved is delivered at the moment”, and so there is no real follow-through of what is not delivered in the end, which we absolutely need to know and you are working on that.

However, at the moment, within that data, on just the approvals, overall we are looking at 44 per cent of M4(2) category units, which should be 100% - and this is only data since 2015, since the recommendations came in - and six per cent of M4(3) category, when the target is ten per cent . That is obviously not high enough. Then there is an enormous variation between different boroughs. The City of London [Corporation] appears to be delivering 23 per cent , whereas the lowest is Havering [Council], which is 0.73 per cent. You said before you are not sure that these numbers are real, or they might be to do with different levels of reporting. However, if we are trying to rely on this data, it would appear that some of the Outer London boroughs are particularly low, but that is not a general pattern, either. Some of the Outer London boroughs are much higher.

What can you tell us about whether we can draw any conclusions from this data as it currently stands? Should there be more caveats put in there?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I would not draw conclusions at the moment. Just bear in mind that although we have M4(2), we did have its predecessor, which was Lifetime Homes. These are not new standards; they have been around for a really long time, and they are well embedded within the industry. Where we have these real anomalies with a borough being really low, we strongly suspect that is a reporting problem. However, like what we do with the housing, for example, we go directly into those local authorities. We say, “Look, this data just does not seem right. What is going on here?” We work with them to clean the data. That requires one-to-one intervention with all of those boroughs. We have really good colleagues who have good relationships, but we have not done that work on this particular data yet. We can let you know once we feel a bit more confident about it coming through. Therefore, when we have those massive anomalies between one borough and another, we are not convinced there is full compliance, but we are not in a position to even judge that at the moment until we iron out these data issues.

Siân Berry AM: OK. Is there any scope for getting separately reported data for the two different subcategories within M4(3). That is really what we are all dying to know, essentially, what you are achieving.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I would have to get back to you on that. Yes, I do not know the data tables, but I can get back to you on that.

Siân Berry AM: OK. Great. Then I think we will have some recommendations around that and making Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are meaningful for disabled people when they are actually buying homes.

Do you have any plans also to do anything to investigate existing stock or the quality of refurbishments or retrofits?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): That is largely outside of the Plan. It might be another bit of the GLA.

Siân Berry AM: In terms of the need, though, the background data, the supporting data for the Plan, knowing what is accessible and not in existing stock is surely a thing of interest.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Policy-wise, that would be a question for Housing [and Land]. They may well be researching that level of housing need, but it is not something I would be aware of ad hoc day-to-day now. I can go and ask them.

Siân Berry AM: OK. It does not form part of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) data that you --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): I am sure it does, but I do not oversee it. That is a Housing issue.

Siân Berry AM: OK.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Like all the other input from all the other bits of the GLA, the London Plan benefits from that input but not --

Siân Berry AM: You do not get to specify what they should be --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): The SHMA is something that was an input to the current Plan.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I would just note, if there was a standardisation of how we refer to things, that would benefit the existing stock as well. If you did have somebody who had adapted a home for a wheelchair user, if there was a standard way of saying out there, then, when that person did not need it anymore, somebody else could take that as a wheelchair-accessible home. That would be across both new and old housing stock.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Although local authorities tend to know well which of their properties are wheelchair accessible and have been adapted, or at least they should do.

Siân Berry AM: Yes, exactly. Hopefully, we can be collating that at a London level. Then the other thing is - you have touched on this before - you basically said you have no capacity to go and check that there is compliance with the policies at borough level at the completion stage. Is that right? You have no plans, not even to do any spot checks or sampling?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): I would not rule out that it never happens on a particular project, but I am not aware of any because we have never had that capacity. We are not an enforcer of boroughs and we do not have an enforcement function at all for developments. Obviously, boroughs do. Again, they are challenged in terms of resources and so we cannot be surprised that it does not happen as much as anyone would like. There is probably very little in the Plan, such as what we are talking about today, that a borough would not agree with that is desirable and, therefore, there is an incentive that boroughs would enforce it. However, as I say, we do not have the resources and borough resources are challenged. We absolutely acknowledge the gap there. Lisa wants to --

Siân Berry AM: Our Committee has heard that on a number of different issues, have we not, in recent years?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I did want to just say, though, that we do not have that enforcement function and nor can we require local planning authorities to do that kind of enforcement. However, I would say that within policy and the current London Plan, there is a precedent set around post-occupation checks and energy. Certainly, from the conversations between yesterday and today, at those points it can be something just really stupid that makes people's lives miserable, just thoughtlessness, and so we are very mindful of that. We are thinking about that, and we have heard that point.

Siân Berry AM: Excellent. There are so many parallels with energy where the actual implementation, the work done and the quality of the work -- a mistake can ruin the entire principle of the thing. It is a very strong parallel, actually, and where we have policies that relate to energy, we might consider copying them over a little bit more. We will have more conversations about this.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Assembly Member Berry. Over to you, Assembly Member Best.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Sorry, can I just come back on that, though? It is key to remember that different legislation does enable us to do different things in different areas. For example, on energy, we are able to go far in advance of national policy because there is other legislation that enables us to do so, whereas we are not allowed to be in the vanguard in other areas in the London Plan. It has become a bit of a mix and match.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you for the clarification. Assembly Member Best?

Emma Best AM: Thanks. Good morning. Afternoon, I should say. How is the London Plan addressing the challenges faced by disabled individuals in navigating public transport?

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Those broad points about accessibility, about not just how you move within the site itself but recognising that people need to be able to access goods and services beyond, which often involves public transport. It is important. Through planning applications, for example, it does not just look at it within the site itself. It looks at making sure that people can access beyond the site.

That is particularly true of the panel that sits within Transport for London (TfL) and looks at those specific issues, whereas if you have a planning application coming forward, how would those people access the local public transport options? I am just going to get the name of it but there is a specific name if you will give me a moment. They have an independent disability access panel that they get to look at planning applications and things like that when they give the TfL comments on planning applications.

Emma Best AM: How about wider transport outside of the actual development of new housing?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Sorry, could you be more specific?

Emma Best AM: For example, chapter 10 of the London Plan in regard to transport specifically as opposed to, that was an example based on developments and new developments.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): The overall infrastructure would have to be accessible in any new bits of kit that would go in. For example, if we had a Bakerloo line extension or anything like that, it would have to be fully accessible. In terms of upgrading existing lines, some of the transport infrastructure that has been envisaged is for step-free access, for example, on existing routes.

Emma Best AM: OK. There are a couple of things that we heard this morning to go back to, for example, things like toilets. You have just mentioned the new Bakerloo line but, for example, I know there was upset when Crossrail was brought in and not every new station had a toilet. Do you think that that is something that could be improved upon in the next iteration of the London Plan?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): The London Plan sets what the standard should be but not every site is going to be able to deliver that. That is the same with all policies in the Plan, not just on accessibility. None of the policies are gateway policies. If a policy cannot be delivered, it does not mean that the development cannot go ahead.

There are plenty of Victorian stations where simply the footprint does not allow anything additional. There are plenty of examples of that where the footprint does not allow any additional development to take place. If there is refurbishment and there is space, clearly, it is desirable and it should happen, but if there is not the footprint to physically make it happen, then it will not. There have been plenty of examples where stations have been refurbished and those additions cannot be made.

In addition, , unfortunately, there are even cases where there has been private development over access to stations. I have seen one particular development where it was proposed to have step-free access to some of the platforms and then that was snatched away on a revision of the proposal, not because it was trying to reduce the cost and what they were paying but they changed the design of what they were proposing, and it simply did not lend itself to providing that access. It was not going to be sufficient reason to refuse. It would have been seen as unreasonable to refuse that application based on that change.

Emma Best AM: Yes. We will all understand that basis of how the London Plan works. I know you have said that you do not think many people want to see the document go over 500 pages but, just to bring it back to the point, I am asking specifically about whether there is an opportunity to more closely link something like toilets into the transport section of the London Plan.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): I am loathe to speak on behalf of TfL.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I suspect it would be the Mayor's Transport Strategy and we would keep those conversations going.

Emma Best AM: Obviously, part of the London Plan is -- some of the key figures in that is getting to that 2041 figure of 80 per cent of all journeys by active travel or public transport. What we have heard on this Committee this morning - and I have also heard it on the Health Committee as well - is that a barrier to achieving that is the accessibility of public toilets within the network. There is some opportunity to get that weighting into the London Plan, understanding the caveat that it does not mean that every development can

have it. For example, if we did have that in that document, when you look at stations such as Bond Street, would we have possibly ended up with a toilet? The answer is possibly yes.

Just going on to speak as well about those 2041 targets: Central London getting from currently 90 per cent to 95 per cent of active travel and public transport, Inner London from 70 per cent to 80 per cent, and then Outer London from 60 per cent, I believe, to 75 per cent and so quite a jump there. Something we heard this morning was incorporating in that the idea that some people are always going to have trouble with making those transitions and how that can be addressed more clearly within the London Plan. Is that something that we could take away for a further iteration?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes. That is the kind of thing – monitoring the effectiveness, the feedback that not just the recent Planning for London Programme but also the further engagement over the coming years – all of that together would guide what would be in the Plan. The short answer is yes and the longer answer being the how, yes.

Emma Best AM: OK. Thank you. A final question related on the transport element of it. Around the limits on parking, specifically disabled parking, within new developments, both residential and non-residential – and I do not expect, obviously, a definitive answer because it is in discussion, but is that something that you will be looking at and assessing in further iterations if those current limits are working?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes, absolutely. That was a particular point of discussion when the current Plan was made about the level of provision versus the level of passive provision. We kind of erred more heavily on passive provision because there was an argument about how much was actually being used and the amount of landscaping it took. We were clear that we still wanted to demand the same level – that the schemes were capable of achieving the level that we wanted, the ten per cent, but we did allow more of it to be passive. Was it five per cent? I am trying to do it from memory, which is bad. However, yes, it is definitely something that we would review, how successful that policy would be, and we would look to adapt it on the basis of the evidence.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): I just wanted to raise a point as well just around non-standard cycles. We are making quite a lot of provision and guidance for non-standard cycles that are more suitable for a range of users, both in their storage and also for being able to manoeuvre them around and making sure public realm is suitable for the use of them. To that end as well, we specifically targeted Wheels for Wellbeing to come along to our Planning for London events to hear their lived experience as well and it was really helpful hearing from them, too.

Emma Best AM: Thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): We are going to lose quoracy in about five minutes and so I am going to move us on, I am afraid. Is that all right, Assembly Member Best?

Emma Best AM: The final question I had was on how the London Plan incorporates the perspectives and input of disabled individuals and advocacy groups in the planning process to ensure their needs are met. Do you want --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): How it did or how it will?

Emma Best AM: How it does, present tense.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): We might have to do some of this following up in writing, to be honest.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): We have a long list of groups engaged and that will be engaged. If you would prefer it as a list, that is fine.

Emma Best AM: Yes.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Please do that. Thank you.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you. I will be very quick. We have five minutes left. I am going to loop back to what we were talking about with units that were accessible for wheelchairs or suitable for wheelchairs. One of the problems that was highlighted is just because a unit is accessible for a wheelchair does not mean it is being used as one. Is there anything we can do to try and make sure that these units are being used by the people they are intended for?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Obviously, there is a difference to consider between private and public housing. I would be highly disappointed if a significant amount was being created in the public sector that was not being used for the purpose it was -- and I am not sure whether that is actually being claimed or whether we are just talking about private housing. Clearly, there is a huge issue there. Little is being created and there is no evidence that what is being created ends up being used.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): There is an argument about both. Sorry, I am pushing because of time. There is an argument about both. There are also units that could be in the private sector that are adapted by local authorities because of people's changing needs, which, when that person moves on, go back into the private market. There is probably a charge on the mortgage or something, but there are no real checks on that, are there? That is probably outside of your --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes, that would be the local authority. It goes back to a point that Lisa made that there is no standard. What does it mean to say that there is a private dwelling that has had certain adaptations? What needs does it actually meet or not? It would have to be systematised and implemented by boroughs because people move around beyond borough borders.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): The thing we have come back to is actually the lack of control because it is going to be with boroughs; it is going to be with private landlords. There is lack of regulatory control as well, et cetera. However, if we bring it back to what we can do here as the GLA and look at the Mayor's priority in terms of making sure that houses are accessible - and I know there is a plan that is being worked on with that - the new Council Homes Acquisition Programme (CHAP), which is money being taken out of the Government grant to buy 10,000 units, there is direct control of that from the Mayor's Office.

What provisions have been put in place for that 10,000-home buyback? You can set the standards here and you can control it. What standards and controls are you putting in place for that programme?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Trying to answer as quickly as possible, you would have to put that to Housing because it just would not come under the Plan because there is not any planning application involved.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): I get that and sorry for talking over you. I know we are not supposed to do that, but it is time. One of the things that we established this morning is that we cannot look at these things in siloes. We cannot look at TfL responsibilities like it is not part of the GLA. We cannot look at the London Plan like it is not part of the GLA or Housing like it is not part of the GLA. There must have been some sort of team discussion about this 10,000-home programme that is using Government grant money to buy these houses back. Do you know if there has been any --

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Not under planning because there is no planning aspect.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): But that is not the question. My question is: do you know if there have been any conversations, mindful of the Mayor's priorities about accessibility, about these 10,000 units having a certain level of accessibility, wheelchair access or whatever?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): I would not be aware if there were or there were not because it does not come under Planning because there is no application required under Planning and so any of those policies would sit with Housing or elsewhere within the GLA, not us.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): I understand that completely, but you have not been involved in any discussions about this?

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): No.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): We did participate in having conversations around the Affordable Homes Programme more generally, but I would have to check with colleagues about the buybacks separately just because we have a few --

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): The key point here is everything else that we have highlighted as a challenge, actually, with this buyback programme, you have control. The Mayor's Office has control.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Well, as I say, it cannot come under Planning. Similarly --

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): The Mayor's Office has control.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): -- I know this morning there was reference about private-sector housing and when people do something to their houses - I am trying to steer clear of saying "extensions" - and make changes to their homes, requiring adaptations to be made for accessibility. However, a lot of those changes do not require planning permission and, therefore, it does not even involve the local authority, let alone the London Plan. It simply is not a Planning issue in the sense of what we could make rules about or encourage. It is an absolutely valid question, but it is one for the requirements for Housing and the requirements it can make of what it is doing.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): Just because of time, is that something we can follow up on, just to see what the standards are around the Mayor's commitment to accessibility with these 10,000 units? Essentially, the money from this office is being distributed to it and so there is direct control.

Jules Pipe CBE (Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills): Yes, we can ask --

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): We are absolutely happy to have that, yes, sent as a follow-up.

Peter Fortune AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): The final question Assembly Member Baker passed over to me was answered at the beginning, which was about the publication of the Planning for London Programme, which will happen in December [2023].

I just wanted to ask briefly. Can the sessions be held online, any of the last engagement sessions? We have had some feedback that the lack of hybrid means it has been less accessible for certain Londoners.

Lisa Fairmaner (Head of London Plan and Growth Strategy, Greater London Authority): Yes. two things. Some of the events are online and we did have to balance that. We have had made provision for any accessibility needs people have. We have had a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter here and things like that. We have done our best. We have two participants who are not able to come into City Hall and we will run bespoke sessions with them, probably online and just one-to-one with colleagues around Planning so that we can capture their views and probably together so that they have someone to bounce their ideas off. In addition, every single thing that goes on out there is duplicated online and so anyone for whatever reason who cannot come in can add their thoughts online.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Fantastic. Thank you very much, Lisa. All right. That was extensive and we have run slightly over on time and so I am grateful for the patience of the Committee.