MAYOR OF LONDON

London Plan Guidance

Digital Connectivity Infrastructure

October 2024

Other formats

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Acknowledgements

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London Plan Policy

Policy SI 6 Digital connectivity infrastructure (DCI) – The requirements of SI 6 A (1) are now met by the Building Regulations[1] and are not covered further within this LPG.

Exemptions under the Building Regulations are sufficient exemptions to the provisions of this LPG.

Local Plan making

The requirements of SI6 6 B – Planning authorities should use this LPG as a technical and practical guide for preparing a Local Plan to support the delivery of DCI.

This LPG should be considered when implementing the audit requirements set out in London Plan Policy H14 D and E for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in local planning authority owned sites.

Planning application type and how the LPG will be applied

The requirements of <u>S16 A parts 2 to 4</u> will apply to:

- all major development planning applications (includes new-build, changes of use and conversions)

- non-major development planning applications if required by a Local Plan

- all DCI (also known as telecommunications infrastructure) installations requiring 'full planning permission'.

Exemptions apply to single-household planning applications and other types of consents. See Appendix 1 for full list.

The requirements of <u>S16 A part 4</u> (set out in Section 2 of this guidance) will also apply to:

- DCI prior approvals[2] under Part 16 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended); or any future Order.

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[1] Gov.uk, <u>Infrastructure for electronic communications: Approved Document R (2022)</u>, 4 October 2022. See <u>Volume 1</u> and <u>Volume 2</u> for key building regulation requirements.
[2] This means Section 2 of the guidance could also support any DCI proposals including 'masts, antennae or other apparatus' requiring prior approval notifications received by the local planning authority (LPA). The prior approval procedure means that the principle of development is not an issue, but the LPA will only be able to consider the siting and appearance of the proposal.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for planning officers to determine planning applications and help inform the preparation of Local Plans as appropriate.

It also supports applicants, local planning authorities (LPAs), developers, telecommunications industry operators and their consultants, community groups, and others.

1 About this document

1.1 Purpose of the LPG

1.1.1 This Digital Connectivity Infrastructure (DCI) London Plan Guidance (LPG) is intended to provide practical guidance, from the initial pre-application and design stages and throughout the planning application process. It aims to:

1) clarify the key requirements for developments to provide/support DCI delivery

2) avoid impacts on existing DCI, and address impacts of individual DCI

3) guide plan-making for DCI through Local Plans.

1.2 What is Digital Connectivity Infrastructure?

1.2.1 DCI is physical digital infrastructure, including mobile and fixed (e.g. broadband) connections to the internet and other physical equipment. Examples of these are as follows:

1) Fixed broadband network infrastructure includes ducting, telephone/telegraph poles, the exchange, fibre to the cabinet (FTTC), fibre to the premises/home (FTTP/H, also known as full fibre).

2) Mobile network radio-based infrastructure involves individual mobile masts and antennae, of different generations (3G/4G/5G). Macro cells provide wide-area radio coverage infrastructure for a mobile network. The antennae for macro cells are mounted on ground-based masts, rooftops and other existing structures. 'Small cells' is an overarching term for low-powered radio access nodes that help provide service to both indoor and outdoor areas. Further terminology is provided in the glossary (see Appendix 2).

1.2.2 For the purposes of this LPG, the term 'DCI' only refers to physical infrastructure such as full fibre, ducting, telecommunications masts, base stations, cabinets and associated equipment that delivers digital connections. It includes all the infrastructure defined in this section.

1.2.3 Mobile coverage is the area where a device (such as a handset) can connect to the mobile network. Capacity is the amount of traffic and users the network can handle, and the speeds at which it can deliver.

1.2.4 Digital exclusion refers to instances where individuals cannot access the benefits of digital communication or the internet because they lack the right digital connectivity via the physical infrastructure; a suitable device; skills; and/or the means to pay for connectivity. This LPG seeks to support improvements in fixed and mobile infrastructure provision and mobile

connectivity across London through the planning process. It therefore seeks to help improve digital inclusion and access to services.

1.3   Minimum requirements for improved DCI delivery

1.3.1   All relevant applicants should set out in their planning application how they are complying with Policy SI 6. This includes whether the proposal is exceeding the minimum requirements of Building Regulations[3] and/or justification for any exemptions.

1.3.2   All relevant development proposals should seek to meet the expected demand for digital connectivity for all end-users and support the effective and appropriate use of rooftops and the public realm to accommodate well-designed and suitably located DCI.

1.3.3   All relevant applications would benefit from highlighting, in their plans and elevations, details of any proposed DCI. These should be supported by visuals and photomontages; and should include any explanatory DCI information that could be incorporated within a Planning Statement[4]. All relevant applicants should show evidence of engagement[5] with broadband and/or mobile operators and others. Applicants should also make use of the many relevant toolkits that reflect the latest design principles. This should include confirmation that a suitable provider has offered to provide a connection to a gigabit-capable network for each dwelling/unit; and details of which technology will be used to deliver DCI in the development (e.g., full fibre, satellite, fixed wireless or other technologies). Where possible development proposals should demonstrate that the development will be 'connection-ready' on first occupation.

1.3.4   Each local planning authority (LPA) must decide the relevant appropriate conditions as part of, or separate from, the approved plans; or as a legal agreement, where appropriate. Planning conditions imposed in relation to a

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[3] Infrastructure for electronic Communications: Approved Document R (2022): Approved Document R Volume 1 provides guidance on how to comply with the requirement to install gigabit-ready physical infrastructure, and a connection to a gigabit-capable public electronic communications network, when new dwellings (or a building containing one or more dwellings) are erected. Volume 2 provides guidance on how to comply with the requirements for in-building physical infrastructure for high-speed electronic communication networks when new buildings are erected; or when existing buildings are subject to major renovation works.

[4] e.g. where relevant it could include: the area of search, details of any consultations undertaken, details of the proposed DCI, any technical justification and information about the proposal.

[5] The government provides further best practice and advice that could be useful to planning applicants via the Code of practice for wireless network development in England.

prior approval must only be related to the subject matter of the prior approval.[6]

1.4 Supporting information that may be needed with a planning application

1.4.1 As appropriate supporting evidence may include the following:

1.4.2 **Evidence of prior consultations:**

1) Development proposals, where relevant, should include details of any early engagement/consultation at pre-application stages with network providers (including mobile network operators (MNOs)); the outcome of consultations with organisations that have an interest in the proposed DCI development; and formal agreements regarding the installation of equipment, as well as ducting, cabling and maintenance arrangements.

2) Applicants should include evidence of any community engagement, including with relevant neighbourhood planning bodies, nearby schools and colleges, and other groups, where relevant.

3) Applicants should consult, where possible, all mobile operators with mast sites within 250 metres of a major development site, with regard to the potential impact on mobile connectivity. Applications should provide evidence of such consultation as part of the planning submission. If there are mast sites within 250 metres of a major development, applicants will also need to meet health and safety risks that have been identified in the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015, specifically schedule 3 Regulation12(2), and meet any other standards/regulations as required.

4) For a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennae on an existing building, mast or other structure.

1.4.3 **Transport assessment:** Where relevant, this should address the potential impact of DCI installation on highways and circulation. This includes the potential impact of any ground-based mast/equipment on traffic and circulation, including pedestrian flows, cycle traffic, public transport infrastructure and vehicle movement, if required.

1.4.4 **Heritage assessment:** This may be relevant for any proposed DCI installation and associated ductwork to avoid impacts on designated or non-designated heritage assets, or their setting, as appropriate. Pre-application

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[6] When is permission required?, published 6 March 2014, updated 26 July 2023.

advice should be sought, and consideration given to both the impact on historic fabric, and the visual/other impacts on the building's appearance and the settings of heritage assets. Further guidance is available via Historic England guidance.[7]

1.4.5 **Future upgrade/maintenance/access:** Where relevant, this should plan for dual entry through Communal Entry Chambers, as well as flexibility to address future technological improvements; and/or details on ducting approach for safe, timely and high-quality street works, e.g. using the Dig-Once approach. All new development should incorporate future-proofed DCI to accommodate utilities connection requirements; and be designed to accommodate access and safety considerations. Applicants may provide information (i.e. in a planning statement) of any proposed routes for DCI that require excavation in the highway. Where possible, new DCI should use existing infrastructure – for example, empty ducting previously installed at strategic locations or abandoned utility assets, piped subways, etc. The GLA's Infrastructure Mapping Application dataset[8] may be useful for this.

1.4.6 **Appropriate agreements:** These should be used where applicable and available to support the feasibility of the proposed development. The GLA has produced best-practice example agreements and guidance for wayleaves, mobile infrastructure, rooftop and greenfield sites (see the GLA's webpage on Connected London Resources[9]). Government 'guidance on access agreements'[10] sets out best practice principles that could be useful for local authorities when giving communications network operators the right to access their land and assets.

1.4.7 **Appropriate connectivity rating:** For major developments, applicants are encouraged to undertake an assessment of the connectivity levels using a certification process such as WiredScore,[11] with a view to achieving a rating of, or equivalent to, WiredScore 3. This should demonstrate that developments can meet expected demand for mobile connectivity generated by the development for end-users. Where relevant, applicants may also provide evidence that the proposed DCI is sufficiently capable for its services to reach at least a 'good' (100dBm) or 'fair' (110dBm) signal strength using

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[7] The Installation of Telecommunications Equipment, Including Broadband and Mobile, in Churches and Other Listed Places of Worship
[8] Infrastructure Mapping Application dataset
[9] Connected London Resources
[10] Government guidance on access agreements
[11] WiredScore standard assesses and certifies digital connectivity to help improve connectivity and user experiences in buildings.

the Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP) coverage values offered by Ofcom.[12]

1.4.8 **International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) self-certification statement:** Applicants should self-certify that the DCI, when operational, will meet ICNIRP guidelines. These will be required where there is a new mast or base station, or an addition to an existing one.

1.4.9 **Streetscape assessments:** Where relevant, this should consider the appearance, size, positioning, grouping and colour of DCI and their impact on the streetscape. This should include assessing the impact of any existing, poorly maintained assets owned by telecommunications and network operators, in locations where new assets are proposed; and how this could be addressed through removal of assets.[13]

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[12] Ofcom has set out what it views as 'good' (100dBm) and 'fair'(110dBm) values in its method for the UK. This will be particularly relevant when reporting on mobile 5G availability predictions. Signal strengths refer to control channel signals – for further detail see Connected Nations 2022 Methodology.

[13] For further advice see the Streetscape Guidance (2022)

2 Better design for DCI delivery

2.1 Mobile digital infrastructure

2.1.1 Development proposals, where applicable, should seek to meet the expected demand for mobile connectivity; avoid worsening mobile connectivity; and mitigate any adverse impacts through adherence to key design guidance suggested in this section.

2.1.2 They are encouraged to optimise the use of rooftops and existing structures in the public realm (such as street furniture and bins) to accommodate better-designed, better-located mobile DCI. The siting of cabinets, transformers, masts and other equipment in the public realm should avoid obstructing public access and restricting movement along highways/pavements. This consideration of appropriate siting should include disabled people (including people affected by sight loss; wheelchair users; people with visible and invisible disabilities); and older people.

2.1.3 As demand for digital infrastructure in a location increases (for example, when a new development is occupied) the capacity provided by a mast site can be used up. This effectively 'shrinks' the coverage area around the mast. In some cases, it can cause gaps in coverage between the serving mast and adjacent masts, requiring corrective action to plug the gap. Corrective action can range from adjusting the antennae of adjacent sites (thus filling these gaps) to building new sites. To meet the estimated demand from new developments, mobile operators will rely on a combination of site types and spectrum to provide coverage and capacity to meet user needs, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Site types and spectrum for mobile coverage and capacity

Types of sites	Location	Coverage
Macro sites	Rooftop or individual tower	To provide coverage over a kilometre or so in an urban area
Monopole sites (commonly known as street works sites)	Often sited on highways land	Increasingly important in adding additional capacity to the network
Small-cell sites	Lamp posts or other furniture	To provide additional capacity in high footfall – user demand areas and might cover an area no greater than 250 metres

2.1.4   Mobile coverage, both indoor and outdoor, can be affected by architectural design, building height and the building materials used, including insulation. Developers may choose to provide bespoke in-building coverage and signal boosting solutions (i.e. Distributed Antenna System (DAS))[14] where needed to ensure effective mobile coverage throughout a development site. For major developments, site-specific solutions should be considered at the early design and planning stages. These should take into account the impact of new development, including footprint and height, on area-wide wireless services, and network coverage and demand locally.

2.1.5   Developers should assess, in consultation with mobile operators, the expected demand for mobile connectivity to be generated from proposed developments; whether it would worsen mobile connectivity for existing neighbours; and, where relevant, mitigate any adverse impacts. This should be assessed in the project planning and design stages for futureproofing of digital networks. It will depend on the development type, scale and major socio-economic trends (e.g. hybrid working), which all affect the mobile connectivity demand and capacity needed.

2.1.6   The GLA Connected London Map provides estimated coverage by broadband network services.

2.2   Rooftop sites

2.2.1   Development proposals are encouraged to optimise the use of rooftops to accommodate better-designed, better-located mobile DCI. The Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England sets out that mobile operators should seek to use existing buildings and structures before deploying ground-based equipment.

2.2.2   DCI equipment on the top of buildings should be integrated into the building design to ensure that it does not negatively impact on the design quality of the building itself or the quality and character of the skyline.

2.2.3   Rooftop installations are site-specific in nature and depend on the following technical constraints:

- Antennae should be positioned on the edge of the roof or elevated in the centre of the roof, to avoid 'clipping' (where the edge of the building blocks the mobile signal) and cluttering.

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[14] In-building solutions such as DAS require the use of multiple antennae that form a network facilitating wireless cellular connectivity for an area, structure or building. These can help to distribute cellular network coverage to heavily populated buildings, such as offices, high-rise apartments, shopping centres, etc. As technology in this arena is fast changing, other solutions will be relevant to applicants to put forward in development proposals.

- Antennae positioning should maintain sufficient ICNIRP exclusion zones, which may restrict siting locations on the rooftop.

- Rooftop mast sites require ancillary equipment, such as equipment cabinets, and assets related to the safe operation of the rooftop space for example handrails or grills.

- In the case of major development and/or tall buildings, consideration needs to be given to any existing development with a mobile mast site, to avoid blocking mobile signals in the vicinity by casting a shadow to the surrounding areas. Developers should mitigate the impact to existing mobile network.

- Rooftop mast sites should consider the impact of reflective building materials such as metal sheeting and steel frames; traditional thick stone walls and slate roofs; and newer glazing and materials used for insulation on wireless signal transmission.

- The competing needs for rooftop space from other rooftop plant and infrastructure should be considered when designing rooftop installations.

2.2.4 The visual impact of rooftop mast sites should be minimised. Mobile operators should make every effort to camouflage antennae. Measures may include use of rooftop radio-transparent glass reinforced screening in front of rooftop masts and plant rooms; coloured film wrapping; or other types of screening (where suitable). Film wrapping can allow visual adaptation whilst avoiding the overheating risk associated with painting and other measures. Antennae should also be considered in terms of more concealed designs such as flagpoles, slimline poles or telegraph pole style designs, or using existing structures such as church towers (generally behind the louvres). These techniques may not be appropriate for larger antennae or where ancillary development needs to be located around antennae.

2.2.5 Best practice on ways to reduce the visual impact of the rooftop electronic communication apparatus is encouraged to be shared across LPAs and the industry.

2.2.6 Consideration should be given to designing in adequate space for DCI on the rooftops of any proposed development that may form part of the planning application or prior approval notification.

2.2.7 Special considerations will apply where the building is located within a designated heritage asset (for example a conservation area or registered park and garden) or is itself a designated heritage asset (for example a listed building) or is a non-designated heritage asset (such as locally listed building). Such historic contexts benefit from additional protection because of their heritage significance. This protection includes Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Chapter 16 of

the National Planning Policy Framework, London Plan policies HC1, HC2, HC3 and HC4 and local plan policies.

2.2.8 In the case of a listed building, Listed Building Consent will be needed for any installation on a listed building or structure. In cases where Planning Permission is needed, special regard will need to be paid to the impact on the heritage asset or its setting. In all cases the policy test is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. In some cases, DCI installations may be inappropriate in principle. In other cases, good design and the exploration of options, for example, setting back from the roof edge (by at least 2 metres) may reduce visual impacts and harm to significance. Where DCI installation is being considered in or on a heritage asset, pre-application advice should be sought from the LPA. Further guidance is available via Historic England.[15]

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[15] The Installation of Telecommunications Equipment in Places of Worship

Figure 2.1   Building within a conservation area with poorly located DCI that is highly visible and dominates the building roofline.

2.3 Mobile digital infrastructure in the public realm

2.3.1 Siting of mobile DCI in the public realm – including macro sites such as ground-based individual masts, equipment cabinets and small cells on street furniture – should ensure that applicants consider and minimise impacts on the accessibility and capacity of footways and access to properties. They should ensure access for all, including wheelchair users and those with other disabilities such as visual disabilities. The assessment of the impact on footways should have regard to Transport for London's "Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London",[16] and current and anticipated future pedestrian flows; and avoid reductions in pavement widths where possible. Development proposals should observe the following design and access principles in Table 2, below.

Table 2 – Design principles of mobile infrastructure in the public realm

Category	Design principles
Highways	Comply with visibility and line of sight requirements.
Highways	Not obscure highway nameplates.
Highways	Avoid obstructing existing means of access (including vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian access) and public or private rights of way.
Highways	To ensure access for all users (including wheelchair users and those with other disabilities), the siting of cable boxes and other equipment must avoid restricting pavement width and/or impeding public access and flows.
Highways	Where cable protectors are used on the footway these should also have wheelchair ramps. They should be used only for the shortest possible period.
Highways	DCI intended for use by the public should be designed in an inclusive way, so that it is accessible and convenient to use by all.
Highways	Avoid (including during maintenance) interfering with transport infrastructure or operation, including bus stops, cycle hire docking points, stations and enforcement cameras.

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[16] See Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London (2019) and "Inclusive Mobility" guidance (2021)

Category	Design principles
Visual amenity/open space	Include design solutions to mitigate visual impact by responding to local context and character. DCI should not have a negative impact on the visual amenity of designated open spaces, where possible.
Decommissioning of digital infrastructure	Decommissioned DCI should be removed, and components reused or recycled in line with circular economy principles.

2.3.2 **Ground-based masts** – Existing ground-based masts should be used for network deployment wherever viable. This is to reduce the need for new development and when installing equipment, to minimise the visual impact of new development on the surrounding area as far as possible.

2.3.3 Where new ground-based masts are required, potential environmental and visual impacts should be reduced by siting the masts next to similar vertical infrastructure such as street lighting columns, an existing group of trees, vegetation, or other natural features.

2.3.4 Ground-based mast siting should avoid obstructing public access and restricting movement along highways/pavements. For example, ground-based masts and associated equipment should avoid siting in cycle lanes and in areas of pavements that block movement for pedestrians and cyclists (see Figure 2.2).

2.3.5 **Equipment cabinets –** Equipment cabinets should be the smallest size possible, whilst still being sufficient to host the required operating equipment and allow air circulation to avoid overheating.

2.3.6 Equipment cabinets should be sited to minimise impacts on the accessibility of footways and access to properties (see Figure 2.2). Where relevant, accessibility could be aided by moving away from using telephone poles, and towards burying cables within ducts on streetscapes; and/or removing existing poorly maintained assets where new ones are proposed.

2.3.7 When installing equipment, the visual impact of new development on the surrounding area should be minimised as far as possible (see Figure 2.3). For example, this could mean locating DCI on the edge, rather than centre, of pedestrianised spaces to avoid restricting access or visually impacting users of the space.

2.3.8 Major commercial developments will provide a communal chamber on-site for telecommunications equipment; or make appropriate provision in the vicinity.

2.3.9 Where new small cells or other DCI are proposed for installation on existing assets owned by third parties, a maintenance plan of all assets should be agreed with the relevant highway authority. This is to ensure that the

streetscape environment, and health and safety of the public, are not impacted.

Figure 2.2   Examples of poor siting where siting of DCI obstructs and restricts movement for pedestrians and/or cyclists.

Figure 2.3   A well-designed pedestrian space incorporating DCI, where the monopole and cabinets are sited on the periphery to avoid restricting movement.

3 Local Plan-making and wider council approaches

3.1 Local Plan-making process

3.1.1 Where possible, use opportunities for early engagement with telecommunications operators or digital industry; to share any future plans for network expansion and anticipated timescales; and engage with the wider community to identify opportunities for potential mast sites and other infrastructure locations.

3.1.2 When preparing Local Plans and other interventions, LPAs are encouraged to understand the borough's existing mobile connectivity, capacity and physical infrastructure provision and identify any gaps or shortfall in provision. For example, if an area is identified as suffering from poor digital connectivity, there should be contact with broadband and mobile providers to understand future plans for improved connectivity, and/or identify any barriers to this; and help coordinate improvements where possible.

3.1.3 Accessing Ofcom's latest connectivity coverage reports[17] or their equivalent can be helpful for understanding the connectivity in the given area. It can also help in identifying opportunities for more targeted local actions. The GLA's Connected London Map is a good resource for this work. This type of evidence could help inform the local development plan policies; any infrastructure development plan; and/or other wider council strategies, such as a digital infrastructure strategy or digital inclusion strategy, where appropriate.

3.1.4 Planning policies for DCI may include the following considerations:

- seek to join up the requirements of London Plan Policy SI 6 with any wider council strategies or social and economic initiatives, such as infrastructure delivery planning and digital inclusion strategies

- set clear and achievable gigabit broadband and mobile connectivity targets for the borough; these include spatial and capacity targets (where feasible, map borough DCI locations and/or connectivity/capacity levels)

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[17] Ofcom make their measurement data available for download on their website through Ofcom's open data initiatives. The data is released under the open government licence.

- set out design principles considering specific local conditions – in particular the impacts on visual amenity, access, noise and vibration of DCI installations

- mitigate environmental impacts,[18] such as heat from telecommunications apparatus contributing to city-wide environmental issues (for example, the heat island effect)

- set out clearly the responsibilities of developers and telecommunications operators to engage in pre-application and in the early design and planning stages.

3.2   Recommended best practice for site allocation

3.2.1   SI6 B states development plans should focus on areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access. Hence, Local Plan-making processes should identify and safeguard suitable sites for DCI in major growth areas in the borough to address any identified gaps in connectivity and coverage. This can be done by proactively inviting telecommunications operators to submit proposals for site allocations for DCI; or requiring developers to engage with telecommunications operators on major development sites to address this requirement.

3.2.2   Telecommunications operators should submit potential sites for individual telecommunications infrastructure developments – for example, macro individual towers and ground-based masts, to be allocated in the "call for sites" exercise at the start of the plan-making process. Telecommunications operators should demonstrate that DCI installation is viable on the proposed site allocation, within a reasonable timescale. They should also demonstrate that the proposal represents optimal use of the site, whether individual or part of a development, in accordance with Policy D3 Optimising site capacity through a design-led approach.

3.2.3   For large sites, local planning policies should require applicants to engage with telecommunications operators. This is so infrastructure providers can understand the anticipated scale of growth and the potential demand from future proposed developments. This should also include connectivity targets.

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[18] See London Plan policy SI 4 Managing heat risk; para. 9.4.5. The Chartered Institute of Buildings Services Engineers (CIBSE), through TM 59, TM 52 and TM 49, has produced guidance on assessing and mitigating overheating risk in new developments.

3.3 Joining up with wider council strategies

3.3.1 For large sites, LPAs should require applicants to engage with telecommunications operators, so infrastructure providers can understand the anticipated scale of growth and the potential demand from future proposed developments. This should also include connectivity targets.

3.3.2 Improving digital connectivity is a key part of addressing digital exclusion. LPAs could consider aligning DCI policies with wider council initiatives and resources. This can help address digital exclusion and gaps in coverage and capacity in local areas, such as addressing any gaps in connectivity caused by the cumulative impacts of notices-to-quit in the borough.

3.3.3 Some LPAs have adopted digital inclusion strategies that include initiatives to install DCI in low-income housing/areas. These initiatives include the establishment of social broadband portfolios by network providers; and low-income tariffs for qualifying households to access broadband and mobile connectivity at an affordable rate. A digital inclusion or infrastructure strategy, where one is in place, could help inform local planning policies to maximise opportunities for infrastructure provision and affordable, equitable digital connectivity[19] – which will benefit affordable housing occupiers; and people living in temporary accommodation, and/or on Gypsy and Traveller pitches, for example.

3.3.4 Where possible, LPAs should use opportunities to encourage providers to consider the needs for improved digital infrastructure, and good connectivity provision on existing or new Gypsy and Traveller sites. On LPA-owned Gypsy and Traveller sites and pitches, the adequacy of DCI provision should be considered as part of the audit requirements for such sites, and any relevant issues including DCI provision be addressed in line with London Plan Policy H14 D and E on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

3.3.5 Improving digital connectivity, including supporting mobile capacity, and free public Wi-Fi in key locations, is becoming increasingly important to businesses in town centres and high streets. Good wireless internet access for town centre visitors, whether through Wi-Fi or fast mobile connections, could encourage longer dwell time in the town centres, increasing expenditure in local shops and services. As part of Local Plan-making process, engagement with business improvement districts and other town

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[19] Ofcom has defined an affordable connection as one that costs less than £45 per month. The Universal Service Obligation (USO) provides a legal right to request a decent broadband connection, up to a cost threshold of £3,400 per premises.

centre managers is vital to understand current and future development plans.

3.3.6   Where possible, any public DCI provision should be designed to be integrated into the public realm – for example within street furniture, fitness equipment, wayfinding totems, interactive installations or pavilions. The Barbican's Lakeside Terrace exemplifies best practice[20] of the integration of DCI, through comfortable lounge-style seating with plug sockets and free Wi-Fi, provided without users feeling pressure to move on or purchase.

3.3.7   As technologies that improve efficiency and help reduce resource-usage continue to develop, digital policy approaches will need to consider how data capacity in mobile networks is provided to make use of the latest innovations to help support requirements around initiatives such as the zero-carbon targets and the Healthy Streets Approach.

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[20] See Expanding London's Public Realm

4   Appendices

4.1   Appendix 1 – Summary of all the types of planning applications where exemptions may apply.

NB: All applicants must check with the LPA to see if there are any additional regulatory and local requirements to be met outside of this LPG.

LPG exemptions – please note this is not an exhaustive list
Householder full planning applications
Consent under a Tree Preservation Order and a Notification for Work to Trees in Conservation Areas
Advertisement Consent applications
Certificate of Lawfulness applications
Permitted Development & Prior approval[21] (general) – applicants should check the regulations for latest requirements[22]
Variation of Condition (Section 73 or 73A) applications
Application for Non- Material Amendments to an Existing Permission
Listed Building Consent applications and other heritage assets[23] Further guidance can be found in: The Installation of Telecommunications Equipment, Including Broadband and Mobile, in Churches and Other Listed Places of Worship

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[21] Prior approval means that an applicant has to seek approval from the LPA that specified elements of the development are acceptable before work can proceed. The matters for prior approval vary depending on the type of development; these are set out in full in the relevant Parts in Schedule 2 to the General Permitted Development Order.
[22] When is permission required?, published 6 March 2014, updated 26 July 2023
[23] For example: where the proposed site is a listed building, listed building consent will be required for the works; where the proposed site is a scheduled monument, scheduled monument consent will be required for the works; where the site is within a conservation area, planning permission may be required.

4.2   Appendix 2 – Glossary

Communal Entry Chamber

These are installed in the public highway to provide quick and easy access for telecoms services into new office developments. The chambers allow greater coordination of telecoms connections to new developments; and reduce the number of telecoms provider manholes in the street. See Infrastructure Coordination's case study on Communal Entry Chambers and early installation in the City of London.

Distributed Antenna System (DAS)

DAS consists of a network of antennae that facilitate wireless cellular connectivity for an area, structure or building. It is most often used to distribute cellular network coverage to heavily populated buildings, such as offices, high-rise apartments, shopping centres or sports stadiums. In-building DAS antennae are usually mounted discreetly to a hard or tiled ceiling.

Full fibre/Fixed broadband

Fixed broadband network infrastructure includes ducting; telephone/telegraph poles; the exchange; fibre to the cabinet (FTTC); and fibre to the premises/home (FTTP/H), also known as full fibre.

Ground based mast

The traditional latticed mobile towers that sit in their own access-controlled compound of land. The compound will typically feature an equipment cabin to house radio equipment and termination equipment for fibre 'backhaul' links, which carry the radio traffic to and from the operator's core network where calls are connected.

ICNRP

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNRP) provides scientific guidance on the health and environmental effects on humans of exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic fields associated with applications such as mobile networks and Wi-Fi.

Macro cells

Macro cells provide wide-area radio coverage infrastructure for a mobile network. The antennae for macro cells are mounted on ground-based masts, rooftops and other existing structures.

Major development

For a full definition, see Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Generally, major developments are developments where 10 or more dwellings are to be provided, or the site area is 0.5 hectares or more; or development of other uses, where the floor space is 1,000 square metres or more, or the site area is one hectare or more.

Mobile infrastructure

Mobile network radio-based infrastructure involves mobile masts and antennae, of different generations (3G/4G/5G). These include macro cells; the antennae for macro cells; small cells etc**.**

Mobile network operators (MNOs)

The role of an MNO is often to provide wireless communication services to its customers. It is made up of a network of cell sites spread out across a specific geographic area.

Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP)

This is used as a vital measure in cellular networks for coverage; and to illustrate the strength of the signal. It provides insight into the ability of a user/mobile device to be contactable, or to use their cellular services. A good RSRP does not mean a mobile broadband connection will be of good quality, but it does mean a more reliable connection. The range is as follows: -90dB or above (to zero) is good; -102 dB to -90 dB is fair; and anything less than -102 dB is poor. At -138 dB there would be no useable signal.

Small cell

A small cell is a shoebox-sized radio intended to provide mobile network capacity over a small service area (circa 250 metres). Small cells are designed to be attached to street furniture such as lamp posts; or integrated inside street furniture such as bus shelters. Small cells are typically used by MNOs in high-footfall areas with high traffic demand, such as outside stations or on major shopping streets.

Street works site/monopole site

These terms are used to describe the pole structures that are frequently sites on highways land. They may have multiple supporting equipment cabinets near the base of the pole structure.

Tower companies

Many London rooftops have been developed by tower companies that lease rooftop space from the landlord and install structures. These structures are then sublet to mobile operators that install their antennae and radio equipment on the tower company owned structures.
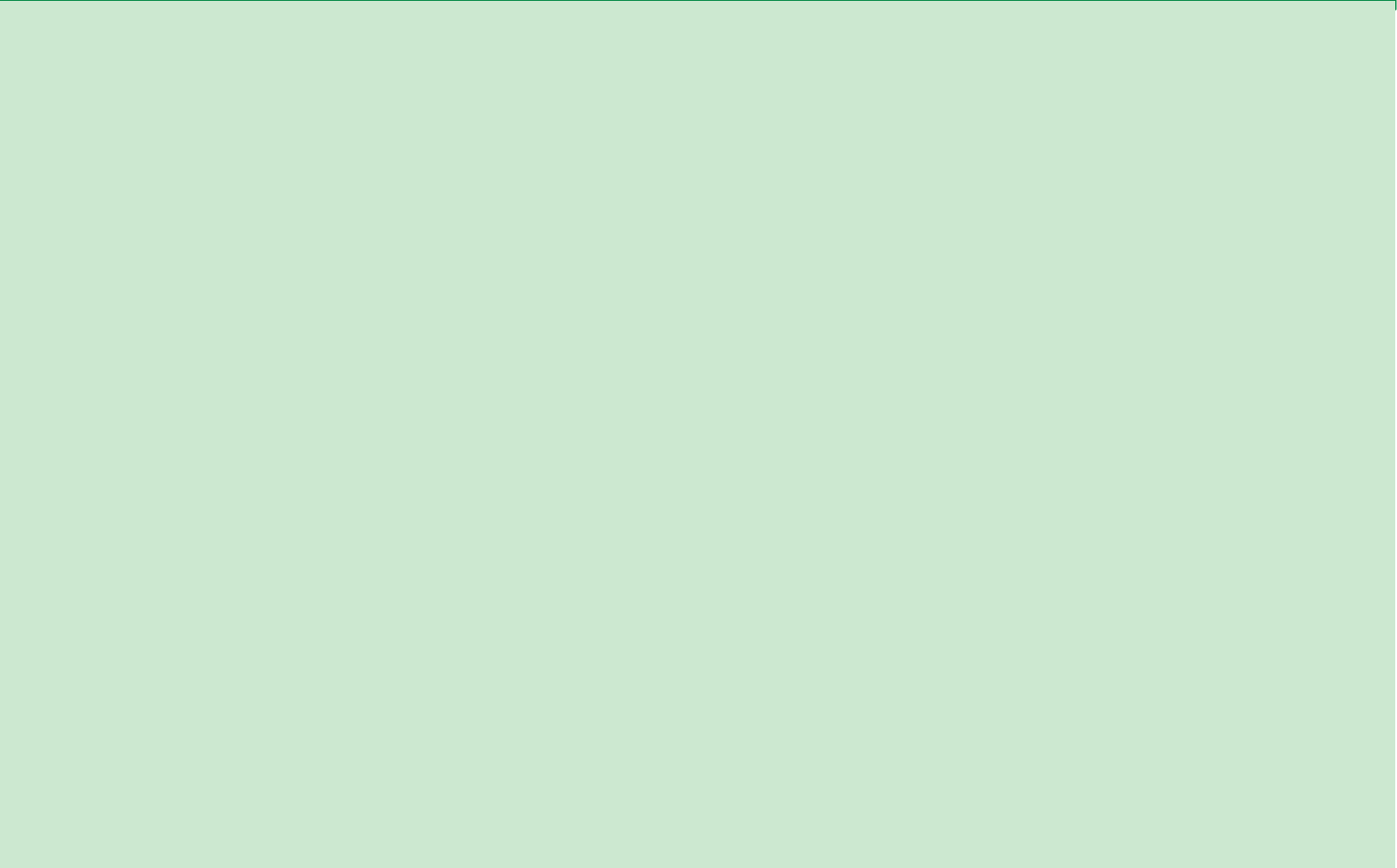
Telegraph pole

The traditional wooden 'telegraph pole', typically used by Openreach in sub-urban and rural areas to support the old 'copper' telephone network. Telegraph poles are now being used in fibre network deployment, with fibre lines running from the telegraph pole to connect homes gradually replacing the copper network lines.

WiredScore

 A certification scheme that provides an independent assessment of buildings' connectivity. It uses several metrics including: connectivity quality, infrastructure, and readiness, providing a benchmark against a single standard. WiredScore can be used to certify both residential and commercial buildings (existing or new builds) and also neighbourhood areas.

Wholesale infrastructure providers (WIPs)

WIPs provide site and kit for MNOs to use. These may include masts, cabinets and other equipment. Their network operators' equipment, such as fibre and antennae, help create electronic communications networks. They are effectively neutral hosts providing a range of infrastructure and operational management services to MNOs who might share the site with other operators. However, they can also be MNOs.

MAYOR OF LONDON

London Plan Guidance

Purpose-built Student Accommodation

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London Plan policies

Good Growth objectives:
- GG1 Building Strong and Inclusive Communities
- GG4 Delivering the homes Londoners need
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Economy policies:
- E8 Sector Growth Opportunities and Clusters
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Plan-making

Authorities and other plan-making groups should use this guidance when reviewing or developing Local or Neighbourhood Plans; Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedules; development briefs; and guidance. There is no specific plan-making instruction in Policy H15 – but it may be relevant to policies setting expectations for particular areas and sites, as well as more general housing policies.

Planning application type and how the London Plan Guidance (LPG) will be applied

The LPG applies where an application has a component of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). That is, any accommodation designed for, and marketed to, students as the primary occupants. It clarifies London Plan (2021) expectations – particularly around policy H15 requirements A(1), A(3), A(5) and B.

Who is this guidance for?

The primary audience is Planning Authorities and others involved in bringing forward proposals for PBSA. It is to help them best provide for student housing need as part of a wider approach to housing and regeneration. This may include developers, providers, funders and London-based higher education providers (HEPs) with student-housing needs.

Introduction

1.1   About this document

1.1.1   This document provides guidance primarily to support London Plan Policy H15. The guidance falls in two parts:

- the role of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) as part of mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods, and how to optimise its impact on policy objectives (section 2)
- expectations around nominations agreements, and how these relate to alignment with housing need (section 3).

1.2   What is purpose-built student accommodation ?

1.2.1   PBSA is housing dedicated, at least in term time, to full-time students.[1] It may be new-build or converted from other uses.

1.2.2   It typically consists of one or more blocks containing a mixture of studio and multi-bedroom 'cluster flats' (linked to kitchen/dining/living rooms); and additional shared amenities targeted at student lifestyles and support (e.g. for socialising, studying, laundry, health and wellbeing).

1.2.3   Blocks are managed by the provider, which is either a university or a specialist landlord; though bedrooms are let individually, usually for an academic year.

1.2.4   It is distinguished from other Build to Rent and large-scale purpose-built shared living products, because of its focus on student needs (and student-occupancy restriction); links with universities; and provision of specific affordable student accommodation (ASA),[2] as required by the London Plan 2021.

1.2.5   It is counted towards housing completions on a ratio of 2.5:1. Every two-and-a-half bedrooms or units (if studios) built within a PBSA block count as a single home.

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[1] A student is defined in the London Plan as a person following a course in higher education as recognised by the Office for Students.

[2] ASA is defined as bedrooms let at rates that, for the academic year, are 'equal to or below 55 per cent of the maximum income that a new full-time student studying in London and living away from home could receive from the Government's maintenance loan for living costs for that academic year' (London Plan, 2021).

Mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods

2.1   The role of PBSA in achieving housing, economic development and regeneration objectives

> **Box 1: the role of PBSA in meeting different policy objectives as part of mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods**
>
> **Housing need** is met by PBSA directly through housing students (including those with particular affordability and/or disability-related needs); and indirectly through helping to alleviate pressure on traditional rented homes. As such, it is counted as part of housing supply; and may also have a role in supporting wider housing delivery in an area.
>
> This is a shift from the situation in the 2010s. Consumer surveys suggest 'all-inclusive' rents and properties, and brand quality, are increasingly significant in students' housing choices. This reflects the desire to have more predictable bills; and dedicated study, sleeping and social spaces that are well designed and maintained. PBSA, particularly where it incorporates ASA, should therefore now have more potential to attract students out of the private rental sector. In turn, this should help alleviate demand pressures reflected in rents and availability of family-sized homes at the London-wide level. However, current indications suggest a lack of PBSA supply relative to growing numbers of students; this is instead contributing to competition and higher rents in the private rental market, especially as this is facing other constraints.
>
> In areas where there is a lot of ongoing housing development, PBSA, along with related housing types (such as Build to Rent) has the potential to provide diversification that can help with market absorption. In this way, it can support delivery of overall housing numbers while in itself meeting an important segment of housing need.
>
> **Support for the economy** is achieved by the students' spending in their local areas and taking on part-time jobs during their studies. Being able to offer accommodation guarantees (e.g. to first-year students) through PBSA is also important to the universities competing for students domestically and internationally and contributes to their ongoing viability, growth and world-class status. In turn, many people who study in London stay here after graduating, and go on to be part of London's highly qualified workforce and pool of innovative entrepreneurs. This underpins crucial economic sectors, from research and development to creative industries and professional services.

> **Regeneration impacts** are realised through the new activity and people that are brought to an area: people who live, spend and work in the neighbourhood, adding to and typically diversifying what exists currently. Some students may go on to be longer-term residents, particularly where there is an appropriate mix of conventional housing (and workspace) in an area that they can 'graduate' into. This can contribute to the creation of new communities where an area has seen population instability, or where the land use is changing to become more residential – for example, in town centres.

2.1.1   London Plan Policy H15 acknowledges the role that PBSA has in meeting housing need, in supporting London's knowledge economy, and in contributing more generally to regeneration – which are needs established at the London level. Box 1 sets this out in more detail, with wider policies of relevance referenced at the start of this document. It is noted that aspects of these roles are enabled in part by its density and the managed and purpose-built nature of the accommodation, especially when compared to unmanaged houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) that are usually the alternative for students.

2.1.2   The policy (at A(1)) seeks to ensure that such local and strategic needs are addressed through development proposals, 'provided that at the neighbourhood level, the development contributes to a mixed and inclusive neighbourhood'. In doing so, the policy recognises that PBSA individually and cumulatively *could* contribute to a mixed and inclusive neighbourhood, *but might not* do so. There is potential for a neutral or negative impact on this important objective (paragraph 4.15.2). Potential negative impacts and opportunity costs relative to other potential land uses have been a concern for many boroughs seeking to balance different needs within their area.

2.1.3   To demonstrate the desired contribution, and provide assurance, it follows that PBSA should be carefully located, designed and managed to optimise its impact on neighbourhoods' mixed and inclusive nature. In turn, this would contribute to other Good Growth objectives, notably GG4 (delivering the homes Londoners need). The following sections advise on how this might be achieved.

2.2   Locating in well-connected, well-served areas

2.2.1   Creating successful mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods starts with locating new housing in well-connected areas, where people can meet their different needs by comfortably and conveniently walking, wheeling or using public transport to access a range of destinations. It should be recognised that sometimes this accessibility will be improving as part of wider infrastructure investment and regeneration plans.

2.2.2   Part B of the policy encourages the development of PBSA in places that are 'well-connected to local services … as part of mixed-use regeneration and redevelopment schemes'. Given intended occupants, relevant services may

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include the facilities provided on university campuses, and campus intensification is encouraged where appropriate. Connections may include bespoke arrangements for student residents to access wider university facilities, such as dedicated buses or pool/hire bikes.

2.2.3 London-wide, areas likely to be suitable for PBSA will include:

- the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and Inner London Opportunity Areas

- Metropolitan and Major town centres

- areas of Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTALs) 5 or 6 and Inner London PTAL 4

- other town centres with high or medium residential-growth potential (see Annex 1 of the London Plan).

2.2.4 Beyond this, other locations that are close or otherwise well connected to university campuses may be suitable. These are likely to be in either of the following:

- PTALs 4 or 3

- other parts of Outer London Opportunity Areas with improving connectivity and facilities.

2.2.5 These locations may be refined further by Local Plans according to their wider spatial and housing strategies. This may include a response to over-concentration as appropriate (see below) and consideration of local HEP growth plans and needs, accommodation strategies and accessibility contexts. For the avoidance of doubt, London Plan CAZ policies (SD4, SD5) concerning the prioritisation of particular land uses also continue to apply in designated areas.

2.3 Avoiding over-concentration and spreading the benefits

2.3.1 London's universities are disproportionately concentrated in a few areas, including within the CAZ. PBSA has clustered in similar areas, particularly in inner London. This has diversified the student accommodation offer from the traditional, university-built PBSA, and private rented homes. Several boroughs where this is the case have sought to limit further growth in such (purpose built) student accommodation, as well as in some cases, HMOs. This reflects their concerns about housing mix in their neighbourhoods and the potential 'crowding out' of conventional housing, given other types of housing need amongst their population. However, in turn, other boroughs (including within outer London, some distance from where London's universities are concentrated) have since seen a particularly high influx of PBSA schemes, giving rise to similar concerns.

2.3.2   PBSA in relation to neighbourhood housing mix can be considered in two ways:

- In support of PBSA proposals that help disperse from traditional concentrations to alternative, suitable locations – perhaps adding an element of student housing to existing residential stock that is primarily conventional housing. This may be particularly relevant where there is a shortage of family homes, which students are currently occupying as HMOs or which they could be in future, in light of PBSA shortages.

- As a more negative consideration, where there are long-standing or more recent concentrations of PBSA, or similar, non-self-contained accommodation,[3] relative to conventional housing. This may be spatial (in particular neighbourhoods) or as a proportion of housing delivery, where PBSA may be considered to be 'crowding out' conventional housing schemes. Such dominance may be particularly acute under certain market conditions; and where development sites are limited (which would ordinarily be equally attractive for conventional residential use).

2.3.3   PBSA should form part of a wider positive strategy in delivering mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods in most Local Plans. It should be acknowledged that what is considered an appropriate balance of PBSA and conventional housing will differ across London, and within boroughs. Local Plans should identify if and where spatial concentration of PBSA, or proliferation of PBSA delivery compared to conventional housing delivery, is impacting the ability to ensure mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods. They should also identify more positive opportunities for PBSA to help contribute to local and strategic objectives. This could be used to develop spatial policies; or to indicate the significance of neighbourhood or pipeline housing mix in decision-making. Further suggestions are given in Box 2, below.

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[3] This may include large-scale purpose-built shared living and HMOs. Short-term lets are also suggested as a use that can favour similar areas to these, with cumulative implications for neighbourhood mix and inclusivity.

Box 2: Policies to manage concentration and dominance

- Policies could:

    - seek to limit the number of units (bedspaces) within a defined area, perhaps as part of a masterplan vision

    - encourage separation between PBSA developments, where there are cumulative impact concerns within a small area

    - indicate thresholds of concern (i.e. the proportions of student housing, relative to conventional housing, that would likely be considered harmful, and the reasons for this)

    - positively encourage PBSA in specific places or character areas where it may be more easily absorbed and achieve wider benefits – including as part of areas of mixed-use regeneration, or on particular smaller-scale redevelopment sites

    - on larger sites, where appropriate, consider conventional housing alongside PBSA, recognising the need for both (though see paragraphs 2.5.4 and 2.5.5, below, regarding housing mix).

- In considering this type of policy, in addition to broader spatial strategy, character and housing capacity (including the balance with other needs, e.g. employment), plan-making bodies should draw on up-to-date information and evidence concerning:

    - existing and emerging housing mix by area, and its relationship with local and strategic need

    - cumulative impact of existing PBSA (e.g. on services and infrastructure and council tax revenues) while accounting for planned infrastructure change

    - local housing delivery issues, and the positive or negative role PBSA is playing or could play in the area

    - housing rental markets and pressures across their housing market area (including build-to-rent and large-scale purpose-built shared living demand and supply), and how additional PBSA may affect these

    - the value of some clustering, as opposed to dispersal to less suitable locations, particularly when associated with particular HEP campuses.

2.3.4   In the absence of such policies, monitoring evidence from planning records, council tax, the Higher Education Statistics Authority[4] and ongoing community and stakeholder engagement will be relevant to decision-making where the planning authority has a specific concern. These are also relevant sources of plan-making evidence. It is noted, however (see Box 1), that some of the positive impacts of PBSA are strategic, and harder to perceive than the negatives – especially at a local level. This should be recognised in reviewing such evidence. Account should also be taken of evolving infrastructure, character and growth contexts as investment occurs and overall housing stock increases.

2.4   Integrating with the neighbourhood

2.4.1   Creating mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods is also about ensuring that different land uses and housing types knit together to create successful, welcoming places that can be enjoyed by all. These are places that feel cohesive; where people want to live longer-term; and where everyone feels equally able, safe and comfortable to move around the whole area. For PBSA this means considering how to contribute to place-making at this scale through the mix of uses, design and management of the accommodation.

2.4.2   Incorporating publicly accessible uses (such as shops and services, open space, and community facilities such as gyms, healthcare or meeting space) within the development is one approach. These uses can help ensure PBSA blocks are not seen as exclusive and/or lacking relevance for the local community. They also help to 'capture' student spending power in a way that can contribute to town-centre vitality and viability. And they can add to the amenity offer for students; and present them with employment and volunteering opportunities that can also benefit the community.

2.4.3   Other employment space – such as offices, shared workspace and workshops (including affordable workspace) – will also help with this principle. These may be more suitable mixed-use elements where the location or orientation of the space is likely to mean insufficient footfall to sustain shops and services. As well as being mixed and inclusive neighbourhood considerations, these mixed-use elements are again relevant to part B of Policy H15. Affordable workspace may be particularly appropriate in areas of changing land use or regeneration.

2.4.4   Another approach is to incorporate satellite university teaching, research or library provision. This can help address concerns that decentralised accommodation makes places 'dormitories' without the wider economic benefit of university employment and related economic activity. Contributing to the range of opportunities available locally could also help to underpin successful mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods, by helping to attract more people to live and/or stay in an area. However, this will require the support of an HEP to

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[4] Can provide (at a cost) borough data by ward on student resident numbers, and student numbers at local higher education institutions

demonstrate the commercial feasibility of sustaining split operation sites; and is most likely to be suitable as part of large-scale masterplan development, as seen at White City and Stratford East.

2.4.5   These are all possible approaches and should not be seen as prescriptive. A borough's Local Plan policies and wider spatial strategy, and site-specific circumstances, will remain relevant considerations – including whether a site falls within town centre or CAZ boundaries.

2.4.6   Uses with wider public access and other communal spaces for the residents and designed to positively integrate with a neighbourhood (e.g. avoiding blank façades) can also help activate ground floors and adjoining spaces. Ensuring more comings and goings, and more lines of sight, can help discourage criminal and antisocial behaviour. This is important in making surrounding streets and public space feel safer for all, including the students themselves. The temporary use of PBSA outside university term-time, such as for other visitor accommodation, is likewise encouraged partly for this reason, to ensure such blocks remain in active use across the year (see London Plan paragraph 4.15.13).

2.4.7   Collaboration with other landowners, residents, businesses and statutory bodies, who have responsibilities and interests beyond the site, is also encouraged. This can help secure other aspects of neighbourhood integration. This work can include:

2.4.8   wider coordination of uses, lighting and key movement routes to support viability, safety and security, and active travel (masterplans may have a role here)

2.4.9   joint funding and commissioning of mutually beneficial services and amenities – such as night-time street wardens, safe havens, transport services (e.g. bike hire, demand-responsive transit) and pocket parks.

2.4.10   Neighbourhood experience and desire to stay in an area can also be affected by matters such as noise, refuse disposal, deliveries and (car and bike/e-scooter) parking arising from the design and management of developments. Design should anticipate and address potential concerns. Management plans are also likely to be appropriate. Making management plans publicly available, and securing them through the planning permission by condition or legal obligation, is encouraged. This enables local communities and student residents to hold building managers to account. Construction management plans have an equivalent role during build-out, and are also encouraged for this reason.

2.4.11   Wider infrastructure impacts arising from the scale of the development, and the typical age profile of occupants, should also be considered and addressed. This should ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect the inclusive nature of a neighbourhood by affecting any resident's ability to comfortably and conveniently access the infrastructure they need. This should

include ensuring students themselves have appropriate access to infrastructure, (e.g. health), which may in some cases be specialised or have a different focus to that most relevant to the general population.

2.5 Housing mix: affordable student and accessible accommodation

2.5.1 Mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods include the building scale and consideration of affordability, as well as wheelchair accessibility and other disability-related needs that vary within the student population.

Affordable Student Accommodation (ASA)

2.5.1 Policy H15 is clear that boroughs should seek to ensure that the maximum level of accommodation is secured as ASA. ASA provision in a scheme can make an application eligible for the fast-track route (FTR) at levels of at least 35 per cent; or, on land that is publicly owned, or industrial land that is appropriate for residential uses,[5] 50 per cent. If the FTR requirement is not met, ASA provision should be scrutinised through viability testing in line with Policy H5. Section 106 (S106) agreements should ensure that it is secured and maintained as such for the lifetime of the building's student use.

2.5.2 London Plan supporting text (paragraph 4.15.14) states that C3 (conventional) affordable housing should not be required, where part A of the policy has been complied with. While PBSA need should be addressed in line with policy H15, on larger sites (typically more than 0.25 ha) the inclusion of separate conventional (C3) housing[6] may nonetheless be acceptable and even desirable as part of pursuing mixed and inclusive neighbourhood objectives. This may be particularly relevant where C3 delivery, is relatively poor, including on sites where previous C3 consents have not been built out. However, there may be trade-offs in terms of site use and management efficiency.

2.5.3 When considering the balance of C3 affordable housing and ASA in the context of viability constraints, the following are important considerations:

- the acute and increasing need for C3 affordable housing

- the greater flexibility of C3 housing to meet a wider range of needs

- rising need for ASA, as student loans have not kept pace with inflation

- the only source of ASA being new PBSA development (no grant support for it)

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[5] In accordance with Policy E7.
[6] This typically needs to be in entirely independent blocks to comply with university safeguarding policies, and for management purposes.

- ASA provision being crucial to secure nominations agreements – and hence another aspect of policy compliance (see Section 3, below)

- ASA being vital to enable PBSA to alleviate pressures on family housing by ensuring rents are more comparable to HMO rents

- ASA, when applied to wheelchair-accessible rooms, addressing an intersection of needs that is not typically addressed in the private rental or HMO sector

- ASA contributing to ensuring London's long-term inclusivity as many students become longer-term residents – so that an income-diverse student population contributes to the good growth objective of the city, continuing its tradition of openness, equality and diversity.

These factors should be clearly weighed in arriving at the appropriate balance, and it will rarely be acceptable for ASA to be entirely replaced by C3 affordable housing.

2.5.5   It is further noted that, compared to C3 affordable, ASA is disadvantaged by not being eligible for CIL relief. This is also relevant to CIL charging schedules. When revising CIL charging schedules, boroughs should take account of the ASA requirement in the London Plan. Boroughs may wish to consider the viability of the ASA; and apply nil or reduced rates compared to market PBSA, based on the outcome of the viability assessment, where ASA rents are secured.[7]

2.5.6   It is expected that the ASA is distributed across the development, with no difference in quality or access to services pointing to the accommodation being affordable (see London Plan paragraph 4.15.10). However, universities note that the preference is for this to be mostly (but not all[8]) within cluster flats rather than as studios. This reflects the fact that such accommodation tends to be allocated predominantly to first-year students, who typically benefit from living with flatmates.

2.5.7   In this case, the ASA may not be evenly or proportionately dispersed across all room types and sizes. This may mean that accurate measurement should be based on the percentage of floorspace, rather than percentage of habitable rooms.[9] In doing so, it is reasonable to include the kitchen/living space within the net internal area of the cluster flats, rather than just the area behind each individual bedroom door. Percentage of floorspace also enables assessment across different product types when PBSA and other housing products are being assessed within the same scheme.

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[7] Saved text from the Housing SPG, 2016 (para 3.9.17)
[8] For example, some neurodivergent students may prefer studios
[9] As noted in the supporting text to policy H5 at para 4.5.3 and the Affordable Housing LPG.

2.5.8   It should be noted that working to keep the cost of other student accommodation more affordable for all is also highlighted as a concern (see London Plan paragraph 4.15.7). For this reason, a significant proportion of cluster flats should be present in all PBSA schemes. Any redesign proposals that involve an increase of studios at the expense of cluster flats should also be discouraged on these grounds, which (as noted above) also links back to the mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods policy consideration.

Accessible rooms and other provision for disabled students

> ### Box 3: Accessible Student Accommodation Standards
>
> To ensure sufficient choice for people who require an accessible bedroom, development proposals for PBSA accommodation should provide (as a minimum) accessible and adaptable rooms, as set out in paragraph 19.2.1.3.2 of BS 8300:2:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment – Buildings Code of Practice. This means:
>
> - 4 per cent (or at least one room, whichever is greater) wheelchair-accessible bedrooms, in accordance with Figures 52 and 54 of the code of practice
> - 1 per cent (or at least 1 room, whichever is greater) with a tracked hoist system (see examples in Figures 31 and 32 of the code of practice), and a connecting door to an adjoining (standard) bedroom for use by an assistant or companion
> - 5 per cent easily adaptable wheelchair-accessible rooms for independent use.
>
> The design guidance and definitions in the rest of the paragraph 19.2.1.3.2, and those in paragraph 19.2.1.3.1 are also relevant.

2.5.9   Wheelchair accessible room provision is expected at a level of 5-per cent, with a further 5 per cent adaptable, in line with the guidance in BS8300:2:2018 Design of an Accessible and inclusive built environment – Buildings – Code of Practice. Further detail is provided in Box 3 above.

2.5.10   Rooms built to these standards should again be distributed across different accommodation types, including some in cluster flats. It is noted, however, that wheelchair users may express a preference to be accommodated in lower floors, to enable easier emergency evacuation. It is important to offer equivalent opportunities and choice to disabled students requiring such adaptations as non-disabled students. Ensuring such equality of opportunity also means that all internal and external communal areas should be accessible to disabled

students and visitors, including through suitable provision of toilets, wheelchair charging and parking.[10] Disabled students may also need ASA; this intersection of needs should be accounted for in the housing mix.

2.5.11   Providers sometimes query the need for this level of accessible and adaptable room provision, relative to demand. However, PBSA (by definition) should be more readily able to accommodate design modifications to meet access needs, than accommodation in the wider private rental sector – particularly that in older buildings. Older, university-owned PBSA may also be more difficult to make fully accessible, given that this hasn't been designed in from the start. Moreover, certainty of provision is important for students' confidence in committing to study away from home, at an institution of their choice, which is an important aspect of equality of opportunity. Choice of room, enabled by the wheelchair-accessible room pool being of sufficient size, is another dimension of this equality of opportunity. As well as providing appropriately designed rooms and facilities, it is important that people with disabilities are aware of this provision through advertising and marketing that highlights it, and other inclusive design features. A commitment to this should be set out in the management plan.

2.5.12   PBSA building design more generally should consider the needs of residents and visitors with a range of disabilities and impairments, not just those requiring wheelchair access. This could include (but is not limited to) other mobility, sensory and dexterity impairments, as well as needs arising from aspects of neurodivergence[11] and particular mental health conditions. Design responses should consider the use of colour, light, soundproofing and way-finding; appropriate multi-sensory alert systems; and the ease of opening doors and windows. Wider wellbeing considerations are covered below.

2.6   Housing and place-making for inclusive wellbeing

2.6.1   Another feature of an inclusive neighbourhood is achieved through building design and management. This is about ensuring students have a quality of accommodation broadly comparable to that of the wider neighbourhood population that we shape through planning. These considerations are also relevant to the requirements of Policy 15 criterion A(5), which refers to 'adequate' and 'functional' living space and layout.

2.6.2   As well as sensible layouts of different bedroom-based amenities that enable their use as intended, without difficulty or compromising safety,[12] there are some wider considerations. These include ensuring good standards of sound-

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[10] While PBSA should be car-free as set out in Policy T6.1E, provision should be made for disabled drivers as set out in Policy T6.1G. This should reflect locally specific need; and be agreed through the Parking Design and Management Plan. It can be onsite or (more typically in high-density schemes) on street.

[11] Guidance found in PAS 6463:2022 Design for the mind: Neurodiversity and the built environment is a useful reference here.

[12] Forthcoming LPG on fire safety will provide additional guidance.

proofing, daylight and natural ventilation in private and communal spaces – where possible achieving dual-aspect shared living rooms or at least a reasonable exterior outlook. However, it is noted that PBSA is designed to provide accommodation quality across the building as a whole, and this should be accounted for in any assessment of adequacy.

2.6.3   Design and space in the building as a whole should also provide for different student needs – such as study, relaxation, socialising, retreat, privacy, exercise, laundry, support and, in some cases, worship. Bedroom sizes should recognise that student bedspaces, even in cluster flats, are also spaces for study, storage, private socialising and, in some cases, prayer. Design flexibility of individual rooms and spaces will be important, but usability should be demonstrated, and crowding and conflict avoided. This should include flexibility to accommodate visitors with different needs, including through provision of accessible toilets in communal areas. User feedback from existing accommodation, and more general youth engagement, may provide valuable input on these points.

2.6.4   As part of this quality, both internal and external communal amenity space (only accessible to students and their visitors), commensurate with the number of students, should be provided. This space should be additional to living rooms; it is a separate need, and distinct from any spaces accessible to the wider community, which are also encouraged (see S2.4 above). Quantums should also be informed by an understanding of: the adequacy of public space and alternative on-campus provision (e.g. libraries, student union facilities) in the area; and the size of studios and cluster-flat living rooms. Given this, it would be expected that the student number should be capped to the number considered through this process, and the related amount of communal amenity space also secured by condition.

2.6.5   Internal and external communal amenity space should be high quality, with a suitable range of amenities that are accessible to all users (such as a variety of seating, lighting, shade and temperature control, and suitable worksurfaces). Such spaces should, individually, be adequately sized and not provided in leftover spaces. They should be integrated within the building design to allow views out and visual interest; to have convenient access to building cores; and to ensure flow between internal and external spaces.

2.6.6   Internal communal spaces should have adequate passive ventilation and lighting, including natural daylight where practicable. External communal space should include landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. It should be accessed directly from usable (and preferably communal) internal spaces; and overlooked from actively used spaces to provide a comfortable level of passive surveillance. In tall buildings, consideration should be given to external amenity space not just being at roof level; it is desirable that some of this space should be available at ground level, or at least lower levels. As well as providing for choice and usability, this can help with wider neighbourhood integration discussed in section 2.4, above.

2.6.7 Management and maintenance of spaces and facilities is another aspect to quality, and this should typically be secured though a management plan (see paragraph 2.4.8, above). This may include details of how flexible spaces and communal facilities (such as food storage and preparation space) are managed to meet different needs, and other aspects of inclusivity. To this end, a commitment to providing and sensitively allocating rooms in LGBTQ+-only cluster flats should be considered. This has proven beneficial in providing safe spaces, particularly for trans and non-binary students – though not all will wish to be accommodated in this way.

Aligning with need – nominations agreements

3.1 Background and purpose

3.1.1 Policy H15 is also concerned with aligning PBSA provision with need that is established through the wider housing evidence base. The policy intent is not to secure provision for every student needing accommodation in London. Rather, it is to secure a proportion of this need, recognising that PBSA is a specialist form of provision that is not as flexible as conventional (C3) accommodation. It is acknowledged that some conventional housing will continue to accommodate students, and in many (though not all) cases, PBSA sites may be suitable for other uses including conventional housing. Given that trends in student numbers and the appetite for PBSA have been known to vary,[13] it is not unreasonable to manage a risk that provision could become 'disproportionate'.

3.1.2 The policy's key mechanism to secure this proportionate alignment with need is the requirement to secure most of the PBSA (including the ASA) through a nominations agreement. This is not required where the development is being built by a HEP to meet its own needs (see policy H15 supporting text, paragraph 4.15.3).

3.1.3 These agreements establish the right of the signatory HEP[14] to allocate to their students a proportion of the PBSA in a block they don't otherwise control.

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[13] This can be due to, for instance, fluctuations in entry requirements for international students and wider university funding availability; the relative cost of such accommodation; and viability challenges in the wider housing sector.

[14] Defined in footnote 77 to the London Plan as:

> 'an education institution that provides a designated course that has been approved by the Department for Education for higher education study which allows the student to apply for government-financed student loans. Higher education study is at qualification Level 4 or above (i.e. above A-level or equivalent) … The Office for Students provides a register listing all the English HEPs that it officially recognises.'

Most HEPs are universities, so this may be an alternative term used; a similar term is "higher education institution".

Nominees are typically international or first-year students to whom universities offer 'accommodation guarantees' as part of their recruitment offer.

3.1.4   The nominations agreement provision for the ASA reflects that HEPs are likely to have the best awareness of who to prioritise and allocate such provision, in light of overall need in their student population. In turn, the requirement to have a nominations agreement to cover a proportion of other bedspaces is intended to help:

- direct accommodation to locations suitably connected with institutions and ensure design meets their students' needs

- link provision to HEP recruitment plans, providing a necessary feedback loop.

3.1.5   It is anticipated that these recruitment plans are sufficiently long-term to affect the appetite to enter such agreements. Given the administration burden, and some risk involved (depending on the nature of the commercial agreement), the policy logic is that this appetite should in turn moderate the market interest in pursuing PBSA. Similarly, if a location is not well connected to any London-based institution by proximity or public transport, or the proposal is otherwise qualitatively deficient, nominations agreements may also be harder to secure. It is recognised however, that these logics are not always applicable. There can be greater conservatism on the part of HEPs regarding provision compared to the appetite of students to live in PBSA in particular locations – not least because of potential commercial liabilities involved.

3.2   Expectations – what and when?

3.2.1   The supporting text to Policy H15 (paragraph 4.15.3) sets out that nominations agreements are expected to be in place by the point of first occupation. HEPs are unlikely to enter into such agreements until plans and, indeed, construction are sufficiently advanced that they can rely on bedspaces being available when needed (e.g. for the start of a particular academic year). However, any Planning Authority will want to ensure a reasonable prospect of compliance with this policy criterion post permission.

Pre-application engagement and 'letters of comfort' with the application

3.2.2   The best way to provide assurance to the decision-maker assessing a planning application is for the developer to demonstrate engagement with one or more HEPs. This engagement should explore their interest in the scheme, and appetite to pursue further discussions towards a nominations agreement. In doing so, it is advisable to target institutions that are close or well connected to the location. To mitigate any risks of non-delivery, this engagement should have

advanced sufficiently, such that ideally one or more 'letters of comfort' can be provided as early as possible in the process before the decision.[15]

3.2.3   Such letters should preferably include details on intended next steps (such as input to discussions on design and other ways of best meeting the institution's needs); and the proposal's role in meeting the institution's present and future accommodation needs. More general needs evidence is unnecessary, as strategic need is established through the policy itself and ongoing monitoring.

3.2.4   Consideration may also be given to whether certain charitable organisations or other collectives could act as proxies for an HEP, with appropriate provision for their costs to be defrayed. In this instance they should have demonstrably close connections with one or more HEP; and be able to set out the link with those HEPs' present and future accommodation needs. This could help address the fact that that smaller institutions need a mechanism to engage with the nominations process in a way that reduces the administrative burden. Similarly, newer PBSA providers need a mechanism that is less reliant on established relationships, to enable them to diversify the market.

3.2.5   Such proxy or 'hub' arrangements may be particularly relevant on smaller sites where the administrative burden of a nominations agreement may be disproportionate to the number of bedspaces proposed. It may also help share any demand risk across a broader student pool. This means it may be particularly suitable for wheelchair-adapted rooms (provided in line with expectations set out above) where the need from any one institution is more variable.

3.2.6   The London Plan team will maintain a list of bodies agreed to be acceptable proxies, in consultation with the HEP members of the Mayor's Academic Forum or other relevant HEPs. Enquiries about joining this list should be emailed to LondonPlan@london.gov.uk and an application form and assessment criteria linked to the requirements set out at paragraph 3.2.4 will be published on the GLA website. For the avoidance of doubt, commercial providers/developers and their own charities are unlikely to be acceptable proxies, given the conflict of interest implied.

S106 agreements – minimum requirements

3.2.7   To fulfil the policy requirements of H15, the developer should be prepared to enter into an S106 agreement as part of the permission. Some flexibility may be needed in legal agreements, given the commercial implications and timescale issues highlighted above. Therefore, the S106 agreement should require developers, as a minimum, to use reasonable endeavours to secure one or more ongoing nominations agreements by the point of first occupation.

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[15] The relevant decision being one relating to the grant of full planning permission or relevant reserved matters.

Consideration should also be given to setting out a fallback position (see below) that should also be secured within the S106 agreement.

3.2.8 The nominations agreement required by the legal obligation should cover (as a minimum) the majority of student bedrooms, including all the ASA. This means affordable and other bedrooms covered should total at a minimum, just over 50 per cent of the scheme's overall total. Where this calculation generates a number of bedspaces that is not whole (e.g. 180.2) it should be rounded up to the next whole bedspace (in this case, 181).

3.2.9 Nominations agreements should cover a reasonable period (at least one year, ideally longer); and the S106 should require continuity of coverage, for as long as the building is in use as student accommodation (see London Plan, paragraph 4.15.3). If for any reason the agreement ceases or expires, either it should be renewed; or a new agreement should be secured with another institution, to cover ongoing occupation by students in this way. For the avoidance of doubt, referral-only nominations agreements are acceptable; it is not the policy intent for HEPs to take on development risk by being obligated to fill the rooms.

3.2.10 As part of the monitoring process, the developer should notify the local planning authority (LPA) of a concluded nominations agreement, providing details of the HEP involved; its duration; and any fallback provisions.

3.2.11 Eligibility for ASA should ideally be income-assessed and accessible in principle to students in all year groups. Given that the definition is linked to the maximum maintenance loan, it is suggested that eligibility for domestic students could be linked to eligibility to access such a loan, (or other, higher levels of student support) which is assessed independently. However, this does not always identify students in need, and may not always be information that is available at the right time. Supplementary measures may also be relevant, including the extent to which parents actually provide support, or proxies such as home address ward-based measures of deprivation. Moreover, some institutions may have particular strategic approaches with their own inclusivity logic.

3.2.12 Nominating bodies should be able to provide an audit trail and monitoring data on request, regarding the allocation of their ASA. This should demonstrate either allocation to those in greatest need or the logic (and preferably evidence) of how their strategic approach helps support wider inclusivity.

Fallback provisions: interim ASA and cascade mechanisms

3.2.13 Any failure to secure a nominations agreement by point of first occupation covering the majority of bedspaces, or any other gap in coverage, should also be notified to the LPA, alongside evidence to demonstrate that reasonable endeavours have been taken to achieve one. Commercial realities mean this process will likely need to conclude about five months before the start of the academic year.

3.2.14   The notification allows for the LPA to be made aware of potential shifts in demand, risk or quality concerns that may be reflected in difficulty securing an agreement. This will help with ongoing housing needs assessments; and consideration of the appropriate proportion and design of student housing that should be pursued, as part of creating mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods going forward. It may also support enforcement scrutiny, where appropriate.

3.2.15   The evidence provided should include a timeline[16] of contact with, and responses from, all HEPs that are well connected[17] with the location by public transport and/or active travel, and any suitable proxies. It should also include detail showing that the provider has constructively engaged with particular HEPs' asks related to their accommodation strategy or equivalent[18] – rather than simply notifying them of the opportunity. It may also be appropriate to have demonstrated to such HEPs the appetite for (their) students to live in the area, if this accounts for their lack of interest, where this can be established through survey or other data.

3.2.15   Where this position has been reached, the developer should be obliged to continue using reasonable endeavours to secure a policy-compliant nominations agreement for subsequent academic years. In the interim, including if a nominations agreement has only been achieved for the ASA, the S106 should secure a fallback cascade mechanism of direct let. This should be encouraged to be applied to all un-nominated and unlet market rate bedspaces, at the point of the fallback position being engaged.[19] Where this has not been anticipated and secured in the S106 agreement, it should be agreed with the LPA in writing. When using this cascade, it should be expected that an audit trail demonstrating marketing and allocation compliance can be made available on request, for enforcement purposes. A monitoring fee, payable to the LPA, should also be considered – linked to such a S106 clause being invoked.

3.2.16   In such a mechanism, the order of priority, from highest to lowest, would usually be as follows:

- full-time higher-education students at local (but not necessarily in-borough) HEPs (as defined by the LPA[20])

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[16] The expectation is that this would demonstrate ongoing contact from the pre-application period onwards; and that the most recent contact is within six months of the expected completion date or termination.

[17] It is suggested that a travel time of up to 45 minutes by public transport, or up to around 30 minutes by bike (approximately 8km) is a reasonable indicator of this.

[18] This may include design specifications and rental term of tariff discounts.

[19] In practice, the requirement for the 'majority' of the development bedspaces to be covered by a nominations agreement will likely provide an upper limit for this requirement. It is expected that, by this point, most if not all of the bedspaces that aren't expected to be covered by a nominations agreement (i.e. up to 49.9 per cent) will already have been let.

[20] This may include those in neighbouring boroughs, or others with a relationship with the area in question.

- those at other London HEPs with good, sustainable transport connections to the site

- any other higher-education student at a London HEP campus

- as a last resort, any other higher-education student needing to reside in London.

Each stage should only be engaged after a suitable time has elapsed, allowing for appropriate marketing and for all bedspaces to be let. Such a cascade provides for a temporary alignment with need – both locational and quantitative.

3.2.17 Whether a nominations agreement exists or not, for the avoidance of doubt, the requirement to provide ASA in line with part 4 of policy H15 remains for the lifetime of the building's use as student accommodation. The S106 agreement would be expected to secure this provision and set out an alternative allocation mechanism in the absence of a nominations agreement covering it. Such an alternative may involve a charitable organisation acting as a proxy for one or more HEP (see paragraph 3.2.5).

3.2.18 As a last resort, the provider may allocate the ASA to students according to need, taking into account the advice in paragraph 3.2.11 in combination with the agreed cascade. As with nominating bodies, an appropriate audit trail of the allocation strategy and its application should be made available on request.

3.2.18 Nominations agreements may also contain cascade mechanisms that could be invoked if the HEP has not been able to nominate to all their rooms by the end of the summer (typically by 31 August). This enables HEPs to manage the risk of unexpected downturns in demand (e.g. another pandemic or a change in visa rules). However, cooperation and collaboration to secure 'plan B' arrangements (e.g. with other nearby institutions, an over-arching body or a 'hub' organisation) are also encouraged.

3.2.19 Where the direct-let provisions of the cascade are invoked by the HEP, the council should be notified for monitoring purposes. If this happens two or more years in a row, and affects more than 12 per cent of the nominated rooms, there should typically be a requirement to use reasonable endeavours to secure a new nominations agreement with another London-based HEP to realign provision with need.
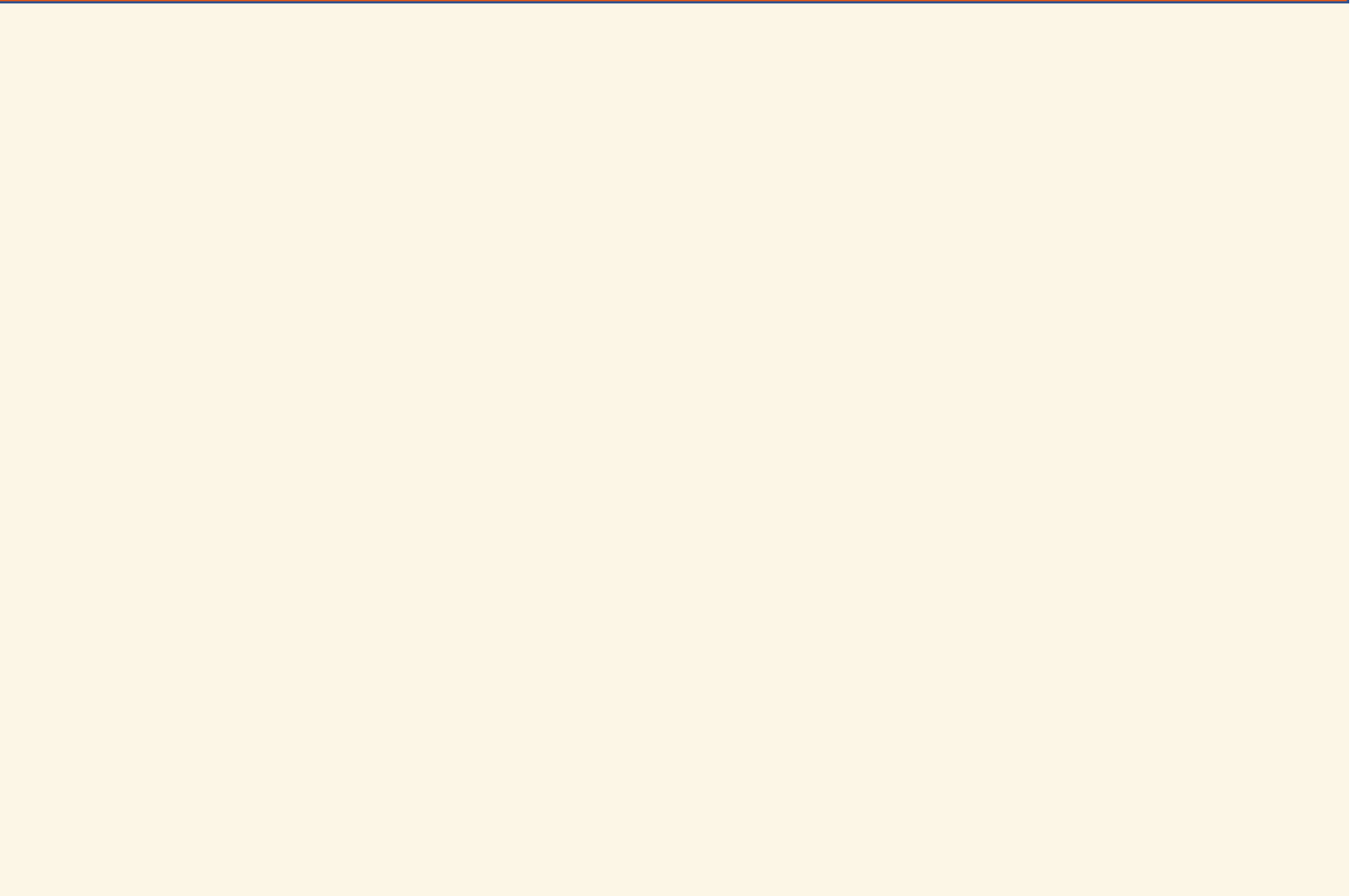
Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for London Plan Guidance

1 Overview

London Plan Guidance name: Digital Connectivity Infrastructure (DCI) London Plan Guidance

Stage (Pre-consultation / post-consultation): post consultation

Date of EqIA assessment: October 2024

Please provide a brief outline of the guidance:

The LPG supports the London Plan Policy SI 6 DCI through clear technical and practical guidance for compliance.

Policy SI 6 A states development proposals should:

1) ensure sufficient ducting space for full fibre is provided to all end users within new developments unless affordable alternative 1GB/s-capable connection is made available to all end users,
2) meet expected demand for mobile connectivity generated by the development,
3) take appropriate measures to avoid reducing mobile connectivity in surrounding areas (where that is not possible, any potential reduction would require mitigation),
4) support the effective use of rooftops and the public realm (such as street furniture and bins) to accommodate well-designed and suitably located mobile digital infrastructure'.

Policy SI 6B states: "Development Plans should support the delivery of full-fibre or equivalent digital infrastructure, with particular focus on areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access".

The focus of the LPG will be in providing guidance on S1 6 A clause 2 to 4 and SI 6 B only. This is due to changes to the Building Regulations in December 2022 which mean that clause 1 of SI 6 A - is now superseded by the Building Regulations - Part R. It is therefore not covered by this LPG.

The LPG's aims are to:

- clarify the key requirements for developments to provide appropriate DCI for its potential end-users (section 1 and 2 of LPG),
- address the impact of development on existing DCI and impacts of any stand-alone DCI in the public realm (section 2 of LPG),
- provide support for how to plan for DCI through Local Plans (section 3 of the LPG).

The LPG supplements Policy SI 6 on DCI, which seeks to improve digital connectivity via physical infrastructure delivery across London. It will do so both in its application to new

development proposals and through the better support it provides to plan-making functions in boroughs. By improving digital connectivity – and thereby digital access – the LPG will help improve one of the key dimensions of digital exclusion.

Who is the guidance aimed at?

The LPG aims to provide guidance to planning officers to determine planning applications and help inform the preparation of Local Plans as appropriate. It also aims to provide guidance for applicants, developers, telecommunications operators, community groups, local authorities, and others.

What are the key issues to be aware of?

The LPG's purpose is to ensure that development proposals provide the appropriate DCI; should meet the expected demand for fixed and/or mobile connectivity for end-users; and if appropriate support the effective use of rooftops and the public realm (such as street furniture and bins) to accommodate well-designed and suitably located DCI.

This LPG will ensure the policy requirements are more consistently applied in planning decision-making across all London boroughs where current practices on DCI delivery appears subject to local variations. It will provide greater clarity for both planning applicants and planning officers. The guidance could help steer industry and local planning authorities to work more closely to address any gaps in network coverage and capacity across London. It could thereby improve digital connectivity.

Background context for the LPG:

The DCI LPG seeks to build on the London Plan Policy SI 6 and other London Plan policies, supporting the Mayor's manifesto commitments from 2021, providing clarity where there are gaps between the Plan and what is covered by the current Building Regulations and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Initially, the LPG had sought to provide further guidance on how to meet the requirements of SI 6 A, clause 1, which provided that development proposals should ensure that sufficient ducting space for full fibre connectivity infrastructure is provided to all end users within new developments, unless an affordable alternative 1GB/s-capable connection is made available to all end users. In effect, this would have required going beyond Part R1 of the Building Regulations 2010, which at that time required buildings to be equipped with at least 30MB/s ready in-building infrastructure. However, changes to Building Regulations in December 2022, meant that London Plan policy SI6 A, clause 1 – requiring the delivery of full-fibre or equivalent digital infrastructure was now covered by Building Regulations. As such in order to avoid duplication with the Building Regulations it is not covered in any detail within this LPG.

The Mayor's 'Digital Access for All' mission seeks to ensure that 'every Londoner has access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025'. The Mayor's wider approach goes further, which seeks to influence the three components of digital exclusion: access, affordability, and ability.

London Plan Policy SI 6 seeks to complement the Mayor's approach, by addressing spatial inequalities in the delivery of improved physical digital infrastructure. Thus, it aims to ensure all Londoners can actively participate in opportunities. This infrastructure could

bring broader more cumulative benefits in the following ways:

- Ensuring fast, high quality mobile connections are maintained and providing digital infrastructure, may also benefit those working from home. This includes those with less mobility, carers, parents, or those on parental leave. It may also benefit, those on low incomes.

- Facilitating the delivery of digital services, which could help increase access to job opportunities; health advice; education and learning; shopping and leisure activities. The cumulative impact of improved connectivity could contribute to improved health and wellbeing, and overall life chances.

- Opportunities to access online health, education, leisure, and shopping services could help to reduce the overall need to travel in the future. This would support less mobile individuals, or those living in areas with poorer transport connections.

- It could also benefit those travelling around the city at night, who are at a higher risk of becoming a victim of crime, as they would be able to call a friend or law enforcement.

- It could improve connectivity for those visiting shopping centres and other public spaces.

The LPG seeks to: address gaps in provision; ensure that the right coverage and capacity are provided to meet existing/new user needs; and avoid reducing mobile connectivity in certain buildings and surrounding areas. This is particularly important for more deprived parts of the city, and for less mobile communities in improving their life chances and economic vitality.

Which of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) aims[1], considered in turn, are relevant to the guidance and the impacts identified?

1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act).

   No

2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

   Yes – the guidance can help create a level playing field and ensure greater digital access for all.

3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

   Yes – the guidance can help create a level playing field and ensure greater digital access for all.

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1 Please see Appendix C for legal context/background information.

2 Assessment

List aspects of the guidance that might impact those with protected characteristics or other identified group(s)[2]

Guidance key aspects, chapter headings, theme etc.	Group(s) that could be impacted
SI 6 A (2-4) - encourages all new buildings/redevelopments planning proposals to be DCI ready. Builds in the potential for inclusivity through its provision upfront, so that all occupants/end-users can have access to digital connectivity (though users will still need to pay for a contract). However, it could eliminate the need to undertake additional expenses for DCI retrofitting later if buildings are made DCI ready upfront.	Positive: Most likely to benefit: Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people; disabled people; older people; younger people; people on a low income; LGBTQ+ people; women; and pregnant people.
SI 6 A (4): covers DCI apparatus on highways so that it does not impede circulation. Obstructions on footways, cycle routes and any shared routes by cabinets/equipment should be minimised and/or mitigated to maintain unrestricted public access. It suggests considerations for the siting of infrastructure, to minimise the impacts on public access at street level for different groups.	Positive: Most likely to benefit disabled people, including people affected by sight loss; wheelchair users, people with invisible disabilities. It could also benefit older people, and people with buggies or mobility vehicles.
SI6 B - Could promote greater impetus for planning departments through their local plan functions to co-ordinate better within the council across other departments. It could also enable, other stakeholders to deliver a more joined up and targeted digital approach locally to physical DCI provision and targeting better connectivity and coverage in hard-to-reach areas by engaging more pro-actively with the digital industry, to ensure connectivity benefits beyond just individual development proposals.	Positive: The guidance can help create a level playing field for all.

Note that the general policy requirement and principles are required through the London Plan. This LPG is only providing, further detail on how the policies should be implemented, and therefore further amplifying the effects.

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2 Including those that share one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (please see Appendix C for definitions), and other groups that are likely to be affected by equalities issues. These include people on low incomes; carers; refugees and asylum seekers; looked after children; care leavers; UK armed forces veterans; homeless people and rough sleepers; ex-offenders and people with experience of the criminal justice system.

2.1 Equality impacts, mitigating actions and justification

This section sets out the positive and negative impacts of the implementation of this guidance for specified groups (including those that share a protected characteristic).

The objectives from the London Plan Integrated Impact Assessment and the EqIA guide questions are used where relevant to structure the answers.

Where possible, evidence (including engagement)[3] is cited, for impacts. For negative impacts, mitigating actions to minimise or eliminate negative impacts are identified, along with any action plan. If negative impacts cannot be mitigated, an objective justification is provided. For positive impacts, considerations are given to how these could be maximised.

The impacts are scored as follows:

- strong positive

- positive

- neutral

- negative

- strong negative

- mixed (both positive and negative impacts identified) or uncertain.

Further explanation of the PSED aims and definitions of protected characteristics can be found in Appendix C.

[If impacts have been identified for particular user groups / stakeholders (e.g., residents, business owners such as market traders, employees, service users etc.), make this clear in your assessment and overview of equality impacts.]

Age (consider particularly children, under-21s and over-65s)

Potential positive impacts and scores

Strong positive impact for older Londoners and young Londoners in low-income households.

Relevant mechanisms are:

- ensuring DCI connectivity and avoiding worsening mobile connectivity; and the digital inclusion and improved access to services this promotes.

- avoiding physical barriers that impede mobility.

Why this particularly benefits older and low-income younger Londoners:

Older Londoners are more likely to experience social isolation and digital exclusion,

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3 See Appendix A and B

particularly if they have low incomes, and if they live alone. This presents additional barriers to accessing the services and support they need to live well. The LPG is likely to positively impact these Londoners. (Strong positive)

It is likely to benefit young and older children (including teenagers) living in low-income households and experiencing digital exclusion due to high costs. Some of these households may rely more on mobile phones for internet connections; these could benefit from improved mobile connectivity to access the internet (e.g., through appropriate mobile masts on roofs or in the public realm nearby). Increased online opportunities to access online health, education, leisure, and shopping services could help to reduce the overall need to travel in the future. This would support less mobile individuals and those living in areas with poorer transport connections. (Strong positive)

Ensuring fast, high quality mobile connections are provided and maintained may also benefit those working from home, such as those with less mobility, carers, parents, and those on parental leave. It may also benefit those on low incomes. The LPG seeks to ensure the right coverage and capacity are provided to meet user needs and avoid reducing mobile connectivity in certain buildings and surrounding areas because of new DCI provision. Once improved digital connectivity has been achieved, it can facilitate benefits such as the greater take up of social tariffs (affordability) and increase mobile connectivity especially for those relying on mobile phones for internet access. (Strong positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

None identified (likely to make people more visible and able to connect)

Relevant PSED aim(s)[4]

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Disability (consider different types of physical, learning, or mental disabilities)

Potential positive impacts and scores

Strong positive impact for Londoners with a disability and those in low-income households.

Relevant mechanisms are:

- ensuring DCI connectivity and avoiding worsening mobile connectivity and the digital inclusion and improved access to services this promotes.

- avoiding physical barriers that impede mobility.

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4 See Appendix C for the PSED aims

Why this benefits Londoners with a disability and those in low-income households:

There is evidence suggesting that a large proportion of adult disabled people are likely to be internet non-users who face digital exclusion. Thus, for disabled people irrespective of age having appropriate built-in physical DCI provision where they live could strongly enhance their social inclusion opportunities (e.g., those with mobility issues could be saved from having to travel unduly for services or everyday needs). Increased online opportunities to access online health, education, leisure, and shopping services could help to reduce the overall need to travel in the future, supporting less mobile individuals and those living in areas with poorer accessible transport connections. (Strong positive)

Ensuring fast, high quality mobile connections are provided and maintained may also benefit those working from home, such as those with less mobility, carers, parents, and those on parental leave, as well as those on low incomes. It seeks to ensure the right coverage and capacity are provided to meet user needs and avoid reducing mobile connectivity in certain buildings and surrounding areas because of new DCI provision. Once improved digital connectivity has been achieved, it can facilitate benefits such as the greater take up of social tariffs (affordability) and increased mobile connectivity especially for those relying on mobile phones for internet access. (Strong positive)

The LPG seeks to optimise the use of rooftops and public realm to accommodate better designed and suitably located mobile DCI. It seeks to discourage poor siting, such as cabinets, transformers, and masts in the public realm, which may restrict public access for all at street level – poor siting can restrict pavement width. This consideration of appropriate siting could benefit disabled people, including people affected by sight loss, wheelchair users and, people with invisible disabilities, and older people. (Strong positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

None identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Gender reassignment

Potential positive impacts and scores

Likely to make people more visible and able to connect. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Marriage and civil partnership

Potential positive impacts and scores

Likely to make people more visible and able to connect. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)[5]

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Pregnancy and maternity

Potential positive impacts and scores

Potentially positive impacts as greater digital access could help in accessing midwives and other medical support; and save on travel for medical services at a time when it may be difficult to walk, etc. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

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5 Only the first of the three PSED aims (eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act) applies to this characteristic.

Race (consider refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, Gypsies and Travellers)

Potential positive impacts and scores

Strong positive impact for Londoners from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and other backgrounds, including those in low-income households.

Relevant mechanisms are:

- ensuring DCI connectivity and avoiding worsening mobile connectivity and the digital inclusion and improved access to services this promotes,

- avoiding physical barriers that impede mobility.

Why this benefits Londoners from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, and other backgrounds, including those in low-income households:

Londoners from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely than those from a White background to live in poverty and overcrowded households, and to experience difficulties with housing costs. The Mayor's Digital Access for All mission research shows that Londoners with a Minority Ethnic origin, culture, and language are more likely to live in areas where connectivity is poor; and those on low incomes are more likely to be digitally excluded. (Strong positive)

In particular, Gypsies and Travellers experience high levels of digital exclusion. They are less likely to use the internet regularly; less likely to possess digital skills; and significantly less likely to have a household internet connection than the majority population'. One key finding is that only 38 per cent of Gypsies and Travellers (33 per cent if housed) had a household internet connection, compared to 86 per cent of the general population. The most important ways this group accessed the internet was through mobile data and/or public Wi-Fi[6]. To some extent, understanding of digital exclusion issues faced by the Gypsy and Traveller community are likely to be applicable to other displaced communities, such as refugees and asylum seekers, for whom digital participation may strengthen their social inclusion. (Strong positive)

Ensuring fast, high-quality mobile connections are provided and maintained may also benefit those working from home, such as those with less mobility, carers, parents, and those on parental leave, as well as those on low incomes. The LPG seeks to optimise the use of rooftops and public realm to accommodate better designed and more suitably located mobile DCI. Through this it seeks to: ensure the right coverage and capacity are provided to meet user needs; and avoid reducing mobile connectivity in certain buildings and surrounding areas because of new DCI provision. Once improved digital connectivity has been achieved, it can facilitate benefits such as the greater take-up of social tariffs (affordability) and increased mobile connectivity, especially for those relying on mobile phones for internet access. (Strong positive)

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6 Friends Families and Travellers: Report on Digital Inclusion in Gypsy and Traveller Communities, 2018

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Religion or belief

Potential positive impacts and scores

To the extent that households holding specific religious beliefs belong disproportionately to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups, they are likely to experience similar impacts to those identified for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. (positive). It is likely to make people more visible and able to connect. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Sex

Potential positive impacts and scores

Strong positive impact for women and girls in particular and those in low-income households.

Relevant mechanisms are:

- ensuring DCI connectivity and avoiding worsening mobile connectivity and the digital inclusion and improved access to services this promotes,

- avoiding physical barriers that impede mobility.

Why this benefits women and girls, and those in low-income households:

It is reported that women have consistently made up over half of internet non-users, compared to men. Women are more likely to be economically inactive, low paid, and/or subject to the poverty that affects single parent families and will benefit particularly from measures to improve digital access. It is also expected such women are more likely to

undertake a greater share of childcare and therefore support children with homework which may be online. The evidence also suggests that many under the age of 18 have no internet access at home from a computer or tablet; this may make it difficult to complete schoolwork. Collectively the data suggests women are more likely to be digitally excluded, and that there may be detrimental educational knock-on effects on their children. (Strong positive)

Furthermore, teenage girls are more likely to have restrictions placed on their mobility freedoms due to the perceived dangers of venturing too far to access public space and/or services. Girls and young women often report feeling unsafe when spending time in public spaces. Conversely, this may mean more time spent at home and needing to access the internet for educational resources, entertainment, and other service needs. However, if they live within a digitally excluded household they could be further disadvantaged. Improved connectivity could benefit women/girls (and others) visiting shopping centers and other public spaces; and travelling around the city at night. In these circumstances, these spaces could feel safer and more accessible, as these individuals would be able to call a friend or law enforcement in case of a problem. (Strong positive)

Both these groups may rely more on home internet and mobile phones for everyday needs – improved digital access through improved mobile connectivity through DCI will be vital and could enable them access to social tariffs (affordability) and increase digital inclusion.

More generally, the analysis of the gendered nature of digital exclusion is very sparse in the existing evidence available. Any understanding around this group's experiences of digital exclusion is likely to mirror those within the race, disability, and low-income (poverty) groupings already discussed. The LPG is considered likely to have positive impacts for this group, as it aims to provide more opportunity for digital access and inclusion. (Strong positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Sexual orientation

Potential positive impacts and scores

It is likely to have positive benefit. It is expected that LGBTQI+ communities may rely heavily on connectivity to remain visible and to replace disappearing safer spaces in London. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

People on low incomes[7]

Potential positive impacts and scores

Strong positive impact for all socio-demographic groups in London and those in low-income households, as it aims to provide more opportunity for digital access and inclusion for all Londoners.

Relevant mechanisms are:

- ensuring DCI connectivity and avoiding worsening mobile connectivity and the digital inclusion and improved access to services this promotes,
- avoiding physical barriers that impede mobility.

Why this benefits all socio-demographic groups in London and those in low-income households:

Londoners from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. They are more likely than those from a White background to live in poverty and overcrowded households, and experience difficulties with housing costs. The limits of the evidence in this context are also noted: these are Black and Minority Ethnic statistics on poverty and deprivation, and not wider statistics that would provide insight into the intersectional impacts. It is acknowledged that poverty in low-income households could have a significant impact of digital exclusion. Thus, if you are on a lower income, you have less chance of being online; if you are on a higher income, you are more likely to have online access. (Strong positive)

It is also acknowledged that, as digital exclusion is often caused by poverty, strategies to tackle the problem must align with and reinforce wider work to improve low-income household's financial resilience. It must also include a strong focus on increasing access to affordable broadband connections and devices and improve internet connection in the home. Ensuring fast, high-quality mobile connections are provided and maintained may also benefit those working from home, such as those with less mobility, carers, parents,

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7 The socio-economic duty was introduced into legislation as section 1 of the Act, with the aim of ensuring that public bodies had to take socio-economic disadvantage into account when making strategic decisions. However, in 2010, the newly formed coalition government decided not to implement the socio-economic duty. Though not a protected characteristic in the Act, the GLA recognises that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant contributor to inequality across London and therefore considers equality impacts on people on low incomes as part of its decision making. (Strong positive)

and those on parental leave, as well as those on low incomes. (Strong positive)

The LPG seeks to optimise the use of rooftops and public realm to accommodate better designed and more suitably located mobile DCI. Through this it seeks to: ensure the right coverage and capacity are provided to meet user needs; and avoid reducing mobile connectivity in certain buildings and surrounding areas because of new DCI provision. Once improved digital connectivity has been achieved, it can facilitate benefits such as the greater take-up of social tariffs (affordability) and increased mobile connectivity, especially for those relying on mobile phones for internet access. (Strong positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)
- 2(c)

Other groups such as carers; refugees and asylum seekers; looked after children; care leavers; UK armed forces veterans; homeless people and rough sleepers; ex-offenders and people with experience of the criminal justice system.

Potential positive impacts and scores

The evidence for 'other groups', as a category is more fragmented. However, it is expected to have a positive impact on such groups and likely to make people more visible and able to connect. In this context understandings of digital exclusion issues faced by the Gypsy and Traveller community are likely to be applicable to other displaced communities. This may include refugees and asylum seekers or those with non-traditional life circumstances, for whom digital participation may strengthen their social inclusion and increase opportunities. (positive)

In the absence of more nuanced evidence on how these other often under-represented and disadvantaged groups are affected by digital connectivity issues the assumption here is that they are likely to experience similar impacts to those identified for people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and low-income backgrounds, as well as others discussed above. (positive)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2(b)

- 2(c)

2.2 Overview of equality impacts

Protected characteristic / group	Strongly positive impacts	Positive impacts	Neutral impacts	Negative impacts	Strong negative impacts	Mixed or uncertain impacts
Age	Yes					
Disability	Yes					
Gender reassignment		Yes				
Marriage and civil partnership		Yes				
Pregnancy and maternity		Yes				
Race	Yes					
Religion and belief		Yes				
Sex	Yes	Yes				
Sexual orientation		Yes				
People on low incomes	Yes	Yes				
Other groups		Yes				

Cumulative impacts

The LPG aligns with policies that promote equal participation and social inclusion.

3 Amendments

N/A.

4 Recommendation

The EqIA of this draft guidance proposed for publication (which has been updated post-consultation) has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken. As such officers recommend that the guidance can be published in its proposed form.

5 Monitoring

Monitoring will take place through the London Plan Annual Monitoring Report and wider monitoring of the Mayor's other strategies and will occur as part of reviewing the London Plan.

6 Appendix A: Evidence reference and content

6.1 Evidence

Age

Older people evidence:

House of Lords: Communications and Digital Committee, Digital exclusion, 2023

It is reported that digital exclusion can affect people from all backgrounds and age groups, not just the elderly. The report states: "around 3.9 million people over 65 (31 per cent of this age group) do not use the internet at home, compared with just 320,000 (4 per cent) for those aged 35–44. More than 3.8 million internet users over 65 are categorised as 'narrow users'. Of the 2.4 million adults with zero basic digital skills, more than half are over 75.18 but younger groups are also affected. More than one in five users (approximately 1.8 million people) aged 35–44 are 'narrow users'. During the pandemic which began in 2020, one in five children did not have access to an appropriate device for home study in 2021, according to the Digital Poverty Alliance."

Government Digital Service, Government Digital Inclusion Strategy, 2014

"Reducing digital exclusion can help address many wider equality, social, health and wellbeing issues such as isolation. 81% of people over 55 say being online makes them feel part of modern society and less lonely".

London Datastore, Survey of Londoners 2021-22, 2022

"One of the headline findings in relation to those 'experiencing 'digital exclusion', was that 'around eight in 10 (81 per cent) digitally excluded Londoners were over the age of 50'."

House of Commons, Tackling the digital divide, 4 November 2021

"Elderly people and disabled people are also disproportionately more likely to be digitally excluded, which presents additional barriers to accessing the services and support their need to live well. People in these groups are also less likely to use the internet if they have low incomes, are older and if they live alone."

London Datastore blog, [Poverty in London 2021/22](), 27 March 2023

"One in nine pensioners in London are living in material deprivation, unable to access the necessities for today's society. Around 95 per cent of Londoners were described as food secure, meaning that one in twenty lived in a household that was in food insecurity."

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](), 4 March 2019

"Since 2011, adults over the age of 65 years have consistently made up the largest proportion of the adult internet non-users, and over half of all adult internet non-users were over the age of 75 years in 2018. This reflects the pattern of the younger generations becoming more likely to be frequent internet users... Lower rates of internet usage among the older age groups may in part reflect the fact that they are more affected by access issues associated with age, such as poor eyesight. In 2018, 5% of those not using the internet also reported that their disability prevented them from doing so".

Younger people evidence:

House of Commons, [Tackling the digital divide](), 4 November 2021

"1.5 million households in the UK currently only have access to a mobile internet connection at home (five per cent), including 6 per cent of all five to 15-year-olds, who have no fixed broadband access in their home"."

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](), 4 March 2019

"In 2018, 12% of those aged between 11 and 18 years (700,000) reported having no internet access at home from a computer or tablet, while a further 60,000 reported having no home internet access at all. Of those in this age group, 68% who did have home internet access reported that they would find it difficult to complete schoolwork without it, suggesting there may be educational implications for those without internet access."

Rouge, [New ONS figures – The Great Digital Divide: Mapping the UK's Internet Non-users](), 4 January 2021

"In Inner London, almost half the population is in their early twenties to early forties (46.7 percent), compared to 30.9 percent in the rest of England. Much of the city is made up of the 'young professional' demographic, however there are still 347,000 people living offline out of the 9 million residents. Since 2017, London's digital divide has closed by an impressive 31 percent."

[The Great Digital Divide Mapping the UKs Internet Non-users (4 January 2021)]()

"In Inner London, almost half the population is in their early twenties to early forties (46.7 percent), compared to 30.9 percent in the rest of England. Much of the city is made up of the 'young professional' demographic, however there are still 347,000 people living offline out of the 9 million residents. Since 2017, London's digital divide has closed by an impressive 31 percent".

Demographic background context: London Datastore, [London's population]()

Key findings from the 2021 Census are as follows:

- London's mid-2021 population was 8.797 million.

- Population growth over the decade is concentrated in older ages. There were fewer 0-to-4-year-olds and 20-to-29-year-olds in 2021 than in 2011.

- London's population is much younger than the rest of the country.

- Economic migrants in their 20s and 30s, from within the UK and overseas, give London its distinctive age structure.

- The older population is much smaller in London as people migrate away from the capital to begin families, or as they move into retirement.

- In Tower Hamlets, 47 per cent of the population is aged 20-39; 33 per cent of London's overall population is found in this group.

- Croydon has London's largest population of those aged 40-64 (128,000, or 33 percent of the borough's total population).

- Bromley has London's largest population of those aged 65 and over (58,000, or 17 per cent of its total population).

Disability

House of Commons, [Tackling the digital divide](#), 4 November 2021

"Disabled people like elderly people are also disproportionately more likely to be digitally excluded, which presents additional barriers to accessing the services and support they need to live well. People in these groups are less likely to use the internet if they have low incomes, are older and if they live alone".

House of Lords: Communications and Digital Committee, [Digital exclusion](#), 2023

"People with disabilities account for a disproportionately large number of internet non-users and are more likely to report lower levels of confidence. Disabilities may involve physical or mental impairments which pose different barriers to inclusion. The Lloyds Consumer Digital Index suggests individuals with disabilities are twice as likely to lack the basic digital skills needed to navigate life online."

GLA Intelligence, [Equality, diversity and inclusion evidence base for London](#), June 2019

"Outside of the home, the nature of London's built environment can support or form barriers to participating in city life. This is particularly relevant to disabled people, older people, wheelchair users and those with push chairs, who face barriers in accessing many services and buildings because of how buildings, spaces and places are designed and managed."

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](#), 4 March 2019

"Across all age groups, disabled adults make up a large proportion of adult internet non-users. In 2017, 56% of adult internet non-users were disabled, much higher than the proportion of disabled adults in the UK population as a whole, which in 2016 to 2017 was estimated to be 22% (see Family Resources Survey 2016/17). For internet non-users aged between 16 and 24 years, 60% were disabled in 2017, a proportion that is the same as for

those aged 75 years and older."

Socio-demographic background for disability: GLA analysis of households-below-average-income data (end user dataset), quoted in [Affordable Housing LPG](#) EqIA, May 2023

"Disabled people are more likely to live in the social rented sector compared with their non-disabled counterparts:

- Nearly 1 in 4 (24.9%) disabled people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK rent social housing compared with fewer than 1 in 10 (7.9%) non-disabled people, [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK 2021](#), ONS.
- In London this proportion rises to nearly one in three (30%). [Table 6: Housing Situation of people aged 16 to 64 by disability status and English region](#), Disability and Housing UK 2021, ONS, APS

"The proportion of disabled people living with parents has risen from 12.4% in 2013/14 to 16.4% in 2020/21. By contrast, the proportion of non-disabled people living with parents is more or less unchanged (up 1% from 18.2% in 2013/14 to 19.2% in 2020/21). ([Table 6: Housing Situation of people aged 16 to 64 by disability status and English region](#), Disability and Housing UK 2021, ONS, APS).

"Deaf and disabled residents are more likely to be living in poverty: 36% of Londoners who live in families where someone is disabled are living in poverty after housing costs, compared to 26% of those in families where no-one is disabled."

Gender reassignment

Equality and Human Rights Commission, [Is England Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2016](#), 1 March 2016

"A 2006 study of transgender and transsexual people's experiences of inequality and discrimination found that 73% of surveyed transgender respondents had experienced harassment in public spaces (including comments, threatening behaviour, physical abuse, verbal abuse or sexual abuse) with 10% having been victims of threatening behaviour in public spaces (Whittle et al, 2007)."

GLA, [Urban Greening Factor LPG EqIA](#), September 2021

"In 2015, the Home Office reported a 9 per cent rise in police recorded transgender hate crimes between 2013-14 and 2014-15. For almost all police forces (41 out of 44), transgender identity hate crime was the least commonly recorded hate crime (Home Office, 2015a)."

These fears and experiences could lead to people not wanting to leave their homes or opting to do meet more of their everyday needs online.

Marriage or civil partnership

No evidence was found that is relevant to the LPG.

Pregnancy and maternity

No evidence was found that is relevant to the LPG.

Race

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](), 4 March 2019

"Across the ethnic groups for which breakdowns were available, the proportion of people who have either never used the internet or have not used it in the last three months came down between 2011 and 2018. In 2011, there were wide disparities in recent internet use among the different ethnic groups, however, in 2018, this gap had narrowed. This is particularly the case for adults of Bangladeshi ethnicity. In 2011, 31.4% of them were internet non-users, higher than the figure for UK adults overall (20.3%). In 2018, the figure for Bangladeshi internet non-users had dropped to 8.0%, a figure that is now lower than for the UK overall (10.0%)."

The report also states: "'Internet non-users' refers to those who have never used the internet or last used it more than three months ago."

GLA, [Census 2021 Report – Ethnic Group](), November 2022

"The Census recorded 8.80 million usual residents in London – that is people living in London with no other address or whose main residence is in London. This number is believed to be temporarily reduced due to changes in some Londoners' behaviour as a result of the Covid pandemic."

The report includes the following key headlines:

- London's population in 2020 was 9m. It is expected that by 2022 it will have returned to around this level.

- In 2021, London's population of 8.8m comprised 4.73m people from a White background; 1.82m from an Asian background; 1.19m from a Black background; 0.51m from a Mixed or multiple ethnicities background; and 0.56m from a background of other ethnic groups.

- White groups made up 54 per cent of London's population in 2021. Of the remaining 46 per cent, Asian groups made up 21 per cent; Black groups 14 per cent; Mixed groups 6 per cent; and "other" ethnic groups 6 per cent.

- Across London, 3.24 million people (37 per cent of the city's total population) identified as White British.

- The largest individual groups, other than White British, were Black African with 697,000 individuals; and Indian with 656,000 individuals. These two groups combined were almost matched by the 1.29 million identifying with "other" White groups (15 per cent of London's population).

Religion or belief

To the extent that Londoners holding religious beliefs belong disproportionately to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups (Census 2021), they are likely to experience similar impacts to those identified for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds above.

Sex

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](#), 4 March 2019

"Although the number of internet non-users has been declining, in 2018, 58% (3.1 million) of these were women, a proportion that has remained broadly consistent over time."

[Census 2021 Report - Sexual orientation and Gender identity Snapshot (January 2023)](#)

Gender identity key statistics:

- "91 per cent of Londoners aged 16 or over (and 99 per cent of those who answered the question) stated that their gender identity was same as registered at birth.

- After those answering that their gender identity was the same as registered at birth, the most frequent category was those answering that their gender identity was different to that assigned at birth, but who gave no specific identity. This included 33,000 Londoners (0.46 per cent).

- Trans man and Trans woman were the next most frequent categories across London. These two categories showed similar numbers overall – 11,500 (0.16 per cent) and 11,300 (0.16 per cent) respectively.

- The borough with the highest percentage responding that they had the same gender identity as registered at birth was Bromley at 94.0 per cent, while the borough with the lowest was Newham at 88.5 per cent.

Respondents in outer London boroughs were more likely to identify as the same gender as at birth. After Bromley, the boroughs with the highest percentages were Richmond (94.0 per cent), Bexley (93.8 per cent), Havering (93.7 per cent), and Sutton (93.5 per cent). The order of the boroughs was largely the same when total number responding was used as the denominator instead."

Sexual orientation

Background context for this group:

GLA, [Census 2021 Report – Sexual orientation and Gender identity Snapshot](#), January 2023

Key statistics on sexual orientation, as stated in the report are:

- "86 per cent of Londoners aged 16 or over responded that they were Straight or Heterosexual. This compares to 90 per cent in the rest of England.

- Excluding Straight or Heterosexual, the top three answers in London were Gay or Lesbian (159,000), Bisexual (108,000), and Pansexual (26,000). Together these three categories comprise 4.12 per cent of the population aged 16 or over.

- The census results for those identifying as LGB+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or other sexual orientation excluding Straight/Heterosexual) are slightly lower than those found by previous data released by the ONS, based on the Annual Population Survey (APS). Excluding non-response and don't know, 4.8 per cent in London identified as LGB+ in the Census compared to 5.7 per cent in the APS.

- As well as Straight or Heterosexual, a higher proportion answered that they were Asexual in the rest of England (0.06) than in London (0.05). Other than that, all sexual orientations were more common in London.

- The City of London and Hackney were the boroughs with the lowest percentages answering Straight or Heterosexual at 79 per cent and 80 per cent respectively.

- There was a split between inner and outer London, with respondents in inner London boroughs less likely to answer Straight or Heterosexual."

People on low Incomes

House of Commons, [Tackling the digital divide](#), 4 November 2021

"Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by those on low-incomes. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, only 51 per cent of households earning between £6,000 to £10,000 had home internet access, compared with 99 per cent of households with an income over £40,000. Even when poorer households had access to equipment and internet, they were then less likely to have the skills to utilise it. The heightened reliance on digital access due to the pandemic has exacerbated many of the inequalities people who are digital excluded face, from employment and education outcomes, to access to services".

"As digital exclusion is often caused by poverty, strategies to tackle the digital divide must align with and reinforce wider work to improve to income households' financial resilience and include a strong focus on increasing access to affordable broadband connections and devices."

There is also evidence to suggest that those on low incomes are less likely to have an internet connection in the home."

House of Lords: Communications and Digital Committee, [Digital exclusion](#), 2023

"Millions of people still cannot access the internet or use it adequately. For some, skills and motivation are the main barriers. For others, affordability is the key obstacle. Others face barriers around accessibility, or poor mobile and broadband coverage. These groups face deepening isolation as society becomes increasingly digital."

"Digitally excluded groups have less access to online deals, money advice and savings tools. Many internet packages have become significantly more expensive. Even before these changes, around 1.4 million households were struggling to pay their broadband bills and 2.3 million struggled with mobile bills, according to Ofcom's January 2023 data. Citizens Advice estimated up to a million people cut back or stopped paying for broadband

because of affordability challenges last year."

ONS, [Exploring the UK's digital divide](), 4 March 2019

"Although the percentage of households without an internet connection has generally been declining, those who live alone are less likely to have an internet connection at home, than their peers. In 2018, 9% of households with a single adult aged between 16 and 64 years did not have an internet connection, compared with only 1% of households with two adults aged between 16 and 64 years. Similarly, 41% of households with a single adult aged 65 years and over had no household internet connection compared with 13% of households with two adults, at least one of whom was 65 years or older… It is important to note that these results do not include the non-private household population, which includes those living in caravans, communal establishments, temporary accommodation, and homeless people. It is likely that many of these will not have an internet connection within the household, though may have access to the internet via smartphones and tablets."

Background context:

GLA, [Census 2021 Report – Household Deprivation](), November 2022

The key findings, based on the analysis of Census data, is reported as follows:

- "Overall, London's pattern of household deprivation is very close to the rest of England, with just over half of all households deprived on at least one dimension.

- "The proportion of households not deprived in any dimensions increased between 2011 and 2021, with this increase clearly greater for London than for other regions.

- "London remains the region with the highest proportion of households deprived in all four dimensions. Even though that proportion is small (0.4 per cent), it still represents more than 13,000 households in London showing all aspects of deprivation.

- "London boroughs have both the highest proportion of households deprived on at least one dimension (Barking & Dagenham, Newham, and Brent) and among the very lowest (Richmond upon Thames) of any local authorities in England.

- "At ward level, concentrations of deprived households are even more obvious, with more than one in ten households showing at least three of the four dimensions of deprivation in seven wards from Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Camden and Enfield."

The report also states:

"A household is deprived in a dimension if they meet one or more of the following conditions:

- "employment: where any member of a household, who is not a full-time student, is either unemployed or long-term sick

- "education: no person in the household has at least level 2 education (five or more GCSE passes or above) and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student

- "health and disability: any person in the household has general health that is "bad" or "very bad" or has a long-term health problem

- "housing: the household's accommodation is either overcrowded or is in a shared dwelling or has no central heating."

London Datastore, [Economic Fairness: Persistent Poverty](#), 7 April 2022

"People in persistent poverty – in low-income households in at least three of the last four years – are least likely to be able to participate fully in society and achieve a healthy lifestyle." (Quoted in EqIA for LPG: Affordable Housing LPG.)

GLA, EqIA for London Plan Guidance: [Affordable Housing LPG](#)

"People living in deprived areas and those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds have been more negatively affected by the health impacts of COVID-19 (Trust for London, 2022).

"Structural inequalities in the labour market particularly affect people from BAME communities, women, those with disabilities or anyone who has experienced discrimination based upon preconceived notions of what makes a good employee (GLA, 2022)."

The report also stated:

"One in 10 working-age Londoners in work were in insecure employment (GLA, 2022). Black / Black British / Caribbean / African Londoners are over-represented in insecure employment (16%) (GLA, 2022). Black African and Bangladeshi Londoners are consistently among the lowest paid (GLA, 2021)."

The report also stated:

"There are many smaller groups in London's population that are at particular risk of disadvantage and social exclusion but are poorly captured by data. These include:

- Looked-after children
- Homeless households and rough sleepers
- The Gypsy and Irish traveller community
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- UK armed forces veterans
- People with experience of the criminal justice system
- Children and adults with learning disabilities."

(Quoted in EqIA for LPG: Affordable Housing LPG.)

Other groups

See above.

6.2 Gaps in evidence

The current research evidence on digital connectivity is focused much more on the theme of digital exclusion. The focus of analysis tends to be around age; disability; race; and people on low incomes.

There is lack of more nuanced evidence for some groups e.g., ascertaining whether some disabled groups (e.g., deaf, blind, or other impairment) are more reliant on certain types of DCI provision for communications or day-to-day needs; whether those with mobility issues need to travel less due to improved DCI; or whether improved DCI makes it easier for them to navigate the public realm. More generally, the analysis of the gendered nature of digital exclusion is very limited in the existing evidence available.

Groups with the following characteristics are poorly captured by data:

1) gender reassignment
2) marriage and civil partnership
3) pregnancy and maternity
4) religion and belief
5) sex
6) sexual orientation
7) people on low incomes
8) other groups.

It is expected that the characteristics listed here are likely to overlap and interact with one another, producing intersectional identities that can in turn lead to distinct patterns of discrimination and disadvantage (GLA, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Evidence Base for London, 2019). In this context, it is assumed the digital exclusion impact would be like that any disadvantaged and or vulnerable groups in society. It is expected that fast, high-quality mobile connections will benefit all Londoners, particularly those working from home, such as those with less mobility, carers, parents, and those on parental leave, as well as those on low incomes.

It is anticipated that the LPG, particularly through the plan-making elements. could target any gaps in connectivity and improve signaling. Improved DCI could take pressure off the existing networks and benefit existing users beyond the development proposal. Overall, it should have a positive impact on most groups with protected characteristics, through facilitating the provision of improved digital access for all Londoners across many areas of life and work.

7 Appendix B: Engagement summary

7.1 Summary of groups engaged and engagement record

Already engaged:

The consultation on the document, including the associated EqIA, was widely publicised, with several 'open to all' stakeholder events, as well as some more targeted sessions with LPAs that are also bound by Equalities Act duties. As the consultation report sets out,

there is limited information on the demographics, including protected characteristics, of participants, as this was not recorded at events and people chose not to respond to relevant monitoring questions in sufficient numbers in the online survey. However, several additional equalities issues were raised in this process, suggesting that this is nonetheless a helpful process.

Future engagement:

The London Plan team continues to work to broaden its engagement reach, including through the Planning for London Programme. Relevant information will be drawn into the monitoring process and used to update the LPG as necessary.

7.2 Engagement record

The detailed engagement record is to be found in the LPG consultation report (see Appendix 1 of the LPG document). In summary, of 13 survey respondents, 38% per cent would have been subject to the PSED.

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Individual	2	15%
Business	1	8%
Campaign group	1	8%
Community group	1	8%
Government body or agency	1	8%
Local authority outside London	0	0%
London borough	5	38%
Professional body	2	15%
Total	**13**	100%

While other engagement did take place, the survey was the main source of input around equalities issues given specific questions on the implications of the guidance for different groups with protected characteristics, and the adequacy of the EqIA that accompanied the consultation draft of the guidance.

8 Appendix C: Legal context

8.1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced the pre-existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The legislation covers the exercise of public functions, employment and work, goods and services, premises, associations, transport, and education.

The Act prohibits victimisation and harassment, and all of the following forms of discrimination: direct; indirect; by association; by perception; or discrimination arising from disability.

The Act recognises nine protected characteristics:

1. Age

   A person having a particular age or being within an age group. This includes all ages, including children and young people.

2. Disability

   A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Certain medical conditions are automatically classed as being a disability- for example, cancer, HIV infection, multiple sclerosis.

3. Gender reassignment

   A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex (Equality Act 2010, Section 7 (1)).

4. Marriage and civil partnership

   Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

   Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favorably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act 2010).

   Marriage and civil partnership are a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

5. Pregnancy or maternity

   Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavorably because she is breastfeeding.

6. Race

   In the Equality Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. For example, you may have Chinese national origins and be living in Britain with a British passport.

   Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race.

7. Religion or belief

   Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief (including ethical veganism) and includes a lack of belief (for example, Atheism).

8. Sex

   A man or a woman.

9. Sexual orientation

   Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

   Though not a protected group in the Equality Act 2010, the GLA recognises that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant contributor to inequality across London and therefore regards people on low incomes as an additional group against which to assess equality impacts.

8.2 Public Sector Equality Duty aims

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the following:

- Aim 1. eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Aim 2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Aim 3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The first aim means the giving advance consideration to discrimination issues before making policy decisions. It relates particularly to scrutinising policies, practices or decisions that could result in discrimination or other prohibited conduct.[8]

Having due regard to second aim involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

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8 EHRC Technical Guidance

- Aim 2(a): remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

- Aim 2(b): take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

- Aim 2(c): encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the third aim involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- 3(a) tackle prejudice, and

- 3(b) promote understanding.

The three aims of the duty are known as the 'general equality duty'. They must be fulfilled before and at the time of the exercise of a public function and on a continuing basis by the GLA when exercising its functions. Each aim must be considered in turn: for example, the obligation to have due regard to advancing equality is quite separate from the obligation to have due regard to eliminating discrimination.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for London Plan Guidance

1 Overview

London Plan Guidance name: Purpose-built Student Accommodation LPG

Stage: Consultation

Date of EqIA assessment: Last updated October 2024

Please provide a brief outline of the guidance:

The Purpose-built Student Accommodation (PBSA) LPG sets out to smooth, and therefore increase the appropriate delivery of PBSA including Affordable Student Accommodation (ASA). It does so by clarifying policy expectations around mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods relating to location, mix of uses, housing mix and distribution and design and management, plus the practicalities of securing nominations agreements. It addresses current areas of inconsistency in interpretation, and causes of delays in the planning process, encouraging positive planning for need. It also seeks to address the balance with other planning considerations that relate to other types of housing need, recognising that over-concentration and dominance of PBSA can nonetheless be problematic if unmanaged.

Who is the guidance aimed at?

The primary audience is Planning Authorities and others involved in bringing forward proposals for PBSA, including developers, providers, funders and London-based Higher Education Providers (HEPs) with student housing need. The guidance is to help them best provide for student housing need as part of a wider approach to housing and regeneration.

What are the key issues to be aware of?

This EqIA takes a general approach, based on the assumption that PBSA is typically designed to meet the needs of predominantly single-person households studying full-time at London-based HEPs. However, the caveat is that this accommodation type has a unique purpose, meeting the varying needs of students, including significant communal social provision to foster social interaction, and is not required to meet housing standards. It should be noted that as the guidance has been revised post-consultation to reflect consultation responses, the assessment has been approached afresh, drawing on updated evidence. However, the original EqIA is available on the LPG webpage.

The draft guidance has been amended post-consultation to address concerns raised regarding the way some issues were described. This was felt to potentially have played to negative stereotypes of students, and ignored their own vulnerabilities related to their age and other protected characteristics. The language of the document has been reviewed throughout to ensure it is appropriately positive or neutral, and clarifications added to guidance on spaces open to the public as distinct from spaces for students and their guests. Additional detail has been provided regarding the consideration of the specific infrastructure needs of students, or students with needs relating to their religion or disability. This reflects consultation responses, as noted in the consultation report at appendix 1, rather than issues identified in the original EqIA.

The draft guidance has also been amended to encourage appropriate management of flexible spaces and awareness-raising of wheelchair-accessible accommodation, and other inclusive design features. This should help to broaden the inclusivity of the accommodation provided in practice, and hence equality of opportunity. This reflects post-consultation amendments made to the large-scale purpose-built shared living LPG, which is a similar managed housing product.

Following the research and recommendations set out in a specific report on trans and non-binary student experiences, a suggested management response (provision and sensitive allocation of LGBTQ+ only cluster flats) has also been added. This should again help broaden equality of opportunity.

The level of wheelchair accessible and adaptable bedspaces recommended by the guidance has been reduced post consultation. This has been carefully considered in light of evidence regarding levels of limiting disability in the student population and typical age group, and is aligned with national good practice guidance. This level remains ambitious to offset under-provision in the private rental sector and provide certainty of provision and choice for disabled students. However, it is more aligned with need and market realities, recognising that there will be tradeoffs with other needs relevant to those with disabilities and other protected characteristics (e.g., ASA provision). In addition, the justification for seeking this level (which continues to be challenged) has been strengthened, with impact expected to be enhanced by the addition of the marketing expectation (referenced above) to improve awareness.

The PBSA sector continues to evolve. Therefore, it will remain important to be alive to any emergent issues not anticipated by the engagement and updated assessment to date. This is the role of ongoing monitoring and engagement.

Which of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) aims, considered in turn, are relevant to the guidance and the impacts identified?

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act).

   Yes

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

   Yes

3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

   Yes

2 Assessment

List aspects of the guidance that might impact those with protected characteristics or other identified group(s)[1]

Table 1: Summary assessment of post-consultation revised guidance

Guidance key aspects, chapter headings, theme etc	Group(s) that could be impacted
Improved certainty/ consistency particularly relating to nominations agreements: will help increase delivery of PBSA and ASA, in turn alleviating pressures on the wider private rental sector (at the London-wide level).	Positive: All groups, especially younger people and students from groups disproportionately affected by low incomes, including people from a black and other minority ethnic group, single parent or disabled parent households, and those that are significantly reliant on the private rental sector (including certain ethnic groups, lone parent households, households affected by limiting health and disability, and families with dependent children).
Fostering mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods through avoiding over-concentration of PBSA and spreading the benefits	Positive: All groups, helping to ensure different housing needs are balanced across an area, and that neighbourhoods are overall more able to meet a range of needs.
Fostering mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods through the proposed mix of uses and other design integration	Positive: All groups who should be able to better meet their housing, employment and social infrastructure needs. Those groups particularly experiencing more fear and discomfort relating to violence and harassment in public spaces due to their protected characteristics should also particularly benefit from design advice seeking to make public spaces safer and more secure.

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[1] Including those that share one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (please see Appendix C for definitions), and other groups that are likely to be affected by equalities issues, such as people on low incomes, carers, refugees and asylum seekers, looked after children, care leavers, UK Armed Forces Veterans, homeless people and rough-sleepers and ex-offenders / people with experience of the criminal justice system.

Fostering mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods through housing mix	Positive - ensures the needs of students with needs arising from their disability and/or those from low-income backgrounds (including relating to their protected characteristics such as race, single parent families) that are more reliant on ASA can exercise housing choice and live independently of their families, experiencing wider student life. Provides further guidance on balancing different needs considerations which should benefit groups adversely affected by imbalances in an area or delivery pipeline.
Fostering mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods though housing and place-making for inclusive well-being	Positive - Disabled people and religious groups requiring prayer/worship space. Highlights relevant design considerations, recognising that different students use their accommodation space in different ways, with different needs that should be met, avoiding conflict. Addressing well-being in this way should also particularly help students with or vulnerable to, mental health conditions.
Nominations agreements – proxy arrangements	Positive - Disabled people. May improve housing choice for students needing accessible student rooms if allocation is pooled via this mechanism.

It should be noted that the general policy requirement and principles are already required through the London Plan. This London Plan Guidance is providing further detail on how the policies should be implemented, and therefore further amplifying the effects.

2.1 Equality impacts, mitigating actions and justification

This section sets out the positive and negative impacts of implementing this guidance for specified groups (including those that share a protected characteristic).

Evidence (including engagement)[2] is cited, where possible, for impacts. For negative impacts, mitigating actions to minimise or eliminate negative impacts are identified, along with any action plan. If negative impacts cannot be mitigated, an objective justification is provided. For positive impacts, considerations is given to how these could be maximised.

The impacts are scored as follows:

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[2] See Appendix A and B

- strong positive
- positive
- neutral
- negative
- strong negative
- mixed (both positive and negative impacts identified) or uncertain

Further explanation of the PSED aims and definitions of protected characteristics can be found in Appendix C.

Age (consider particularly children, under-21s and over-65s)

Potential positive impacts and scores

The guidance should result in an appropriate increase in PBSA and ASA which should primarily benefit younger people, given the 18-21 group predominate in higher education student populations. This should improve their housing choice and well-being as derived from managed brand quality and predictable energy and other bills. In some cases, this may also alleviate household over-crowding for their families back home, improving the experience of remaining children. (Strong positive)

The indirect impact on the private rental sector, alleviating competition and upward pressures on rents may also benefit the housing choice and wider quality of life for some young people. (Positive)

ASA will likely have a positive impact for young people who face being disadvantaged by high student housing costs which can form a significant barrier to accessing higher education. This may be particularly relevant for those from backgrounds affected by other inequalities arising from protected characteristics resulting in low incomes (see below). (Positive)

Children, (particularly those from lone parent households who are significantly present in the private rental sector and more likely to be residing in temporary housing having been made homeless) will also benefit from the alleviation of private sector rent pressures. This benefit may also arise from addressing imbalances in housing-mix and delivery, which may have reduced choice for families in some areas. It can, in turn, contribute to neighbourhoods that are more mixed and inclusive, and address social exclusion and poverty. (Positive)

Older people may also benefit from the guidance on housing-mix considerations. This can help address imbalances at a neighbourhood level, and/or in delivery, that may otherwise have reduced their housing choice in some areas, particularly in relation to affordable housing. (Positive)

Guidance encouraging the design and curation of successful mixed-use, mixed-tenure inclusive neighbourhoods should also help address the housing, employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners (including older people). It can, in turn, help to promote a culture of equality and reduce poverty and social exclusion experienced by older people. (Positive)

More broadly, the guidance on integrating PBSA with the neighbourhood should help foster good relations between students and other residents. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

Older people are less likely to benefit from PBSA or alleviation in private rental pressures, though they are an increasing proportion of private renters so this may change over time. (Neutral)

There is nothing in the guidance that would prevent PBSA developments being designed and managed for students that have children, it is just not the typical business model for private providers. However, older students and those with families would be more likely to live in conventional housing, or in dedicated PBSA that best meets their needs, typically managed by the HEP. A least one Registered Provider is also known to be operating in this space providing access to affordable postgraduate housing. (Neutral)

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

None identified

Relevant PSED aim(s)[3]

- 2 (a)
- 2 (b)
- 2 (c)
- 3

Disability (including different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)

Potential positive impacts and scores

The application of the housing mix and inclusive (building scale) design guidance should increase and improve provision for disabled students, including those with affordability needs. This should widen their housing choice; improve their ability to live away from home; choose a university/course best suited to their needs and career plans; better enable them to socialise with other students; and provide other benefits of living in and visiting PBSA. Improved housing choice may also be a benefit of the pooling of specialist adapted rooms as could be enabled by the proxy arrangements highlighted for consideration.. The guidance that seeks awareness-raising through marketing of inclusive design features to broaden the demographic reach of the accommodation should also help reinforce these benefits. (Strong positive)

Guidance on design for inclusive should improve the health and well-being of all students, and may particularly benefit those with mental health conditions. Better availability of PBSA may also enable students with particular mental health needs to better access support compared to living in the private rental sector, which can affect continuation, progression and achievement in higher education. (Positive)

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[3] See Appendix C for the PSED aims

Considering resident and visitor needs in the provision of communal facilities should enable social interaction between people with different characteristics. In this way it should improve social inclusion and foster mutual understanding. (Positive)

Disabled people may experience harassment in public spaces. The guidance encourages activation and surveillance of through routes and other public spaces and collaborative efforts to address community safety and well-being. This should help address vulnerability and help disabled people feel safer and more secure in public spaces. (Positive)

The indirect impacts on the private rental sector, alleviating competition and upward pressures on rents may also benefit the housing choice and wider quality of life for disabled people – given households affected by health and disability deprivation are significantly present in the private rental sector. (Positive)

Disabled people may also benefit from the guidance on housing-mix considerations that can help address imbalances at a neighbourhood level, and/or in delivery, that may otherwise have reduced their housing choice in some areas. They may also benefit from the guidance regarding quality design that should help PBSA proposals contribute positively to wider neighbourhood inclusivity and activity in terms of access and ability to meet different life needs. This should help to reduce social inclusion and foster good relations between different groups in the community. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

While the recommended proportion of wheelchair accessible and adaptable units has been reduced compared with the consultation draft, this is consistent with national good practice guidance, and levels of limiting disability in the student population. This should still provide for improved choice, (relative to a situation where none is sought) while also enabling other housing needs to be met that may benefit other disabled students. This recognises the tradeoffs in viability terms between for instance, wheelchair accessible room numbers and ASA room numbers. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2(a)
- 2 (b)
- 2 (c)
- 3

Gender reassignment

Potential positive impacts and scores

Those undergoing gender reassignment may experience harassment in public spaces. Trans people in particular are more likely to experience threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence. The guidance encourages activation and surveillance of through routes and other public spaces and collaborative efforts to address community safety and well-being. This should help address vulnerability and help people feel safer and more secure in public spaces. (Positive)

Being able to access PBSA may also better enable students undergoing gender reassignment to access support relevant to their needs (e.g., relating to their mental health, social networks) compared with living in the private rental sector. This may in turn affect their higher education continuation and achievement. (Positive)

Guidance suggesting provision and sensitive allocation of LGBTQ+ only rooms should help address some of the well-being issues experienced by those transitioning or who have undergoing gender re-assignment. Research has identified that such people may wish to have spaces of retreat amongst those that share their protected characteristics or the wider LBGQT community. It is recognised however, that this should be balanced with communal spaces open to all, and not all such students will want to pursue this separation, and that there are also benefits of interaction (see below). (Positive)

Considering resident and visitor needs in the provision of communal facilities should enable social interaction between people with different characteristics. In this way it should improve social inclusion and foster mutual understanding. (Positive)

Guidance regarding design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods, through the design and management of PBSA, will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This in turn should help to promote a culture of equality and reduce poverty and social exclusion, which disproportionately affect some trans people. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

1

2a/b/c

3

Marriage and civil partnership

Potential positive impacts and scores

No impacts identified.

Potential neutral impacts and scores

There is nothing in the guidance that would prevent PBSA being designed and managed for students that are married. Indeed, some providers allow dual occupancy of some of their rooms, which would be available to couples, married or unmarried, improving their housing choice. This is reinforced by guidance that management plans should include appropriate marketing provision that improves awareness of inclusive design features (which may include larger rooms). (Neutral)

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

NA

Pregnancy and maternity

Potential positive impacts and scores

Inclusive design and management guidance, particularly relating to external public realm and internal/external communal spaces, considering resident and visitor needs, should benefit all. This includes those with pregnancy and maternity-related mobility impairments and particular access needs (e.g., related to pram/pushchair use). (Positive)

Guidance regarding design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods, through the design and management of PBSA, will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This in turn should help to promote a culture of equality and reduce poverty and social exclusion, which disproportionately affect some women. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

There is nothing in the guidance that would prevent particular PBSA developments being designed and managed for students that are pregnant or have children, it is just not the typical business model for private providers. However, older students and those with families would be more likely to live in conventional housing, or in dedicated PBSA that best meets their needs, typically managed by the HEP. A least one Registered Provider is also known to be operating in this space providing access to affordable postgraduate housing. (Neutral)

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

2 (a)

2 (b)

Race

Potential positive impacts and scores

Greater delivery of ASA could particularly benefit students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. This reflects that such households disproportionately live in poverty and overcrowded conditions, so such students could, through better access to ASA, improve their quality of accommodation with health and other well-being benefits. This could also help address barriers to such students accessing higher education, and open up the opportunities brought about by this and living away from home. (Positive)

Increased supply of managed, quality PBSA will particularly benefit international students from diverse racial backgrounds. These include students from India and parts of Africa (such as Nigeria) as well as China who make up an increasing proportion of the international student intake. These are groups that may experience discrimination and exploitation in the private sector housing market given their unfamiliarity with the British legal system and language barriers. Therefore, it will likely improve their housing choice and quality, and overall experience, with health and well-being benefits. (Strong positive)

Considering resident and visitor needs in the provision of communal facilities should enable social interaction between people with different characteristics. In this way it should improve social inclusion and foster mutual understanding. (Positive)

Increased PBSA and its potential to alleviate pressures on the private rental sector that push rents upwards and increase competition for housing will likely benefit, in particular, ethnic groups that disproportionately rely on this tenure to meet their housing needs. In London this is non-British White and Chinese groups. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness which will in part due to unaffordable rent increases, and these groups may also benefit from this mechanism. (Positive)

People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds may benefit from the guidance on housing-mix considerations that can help address imbalances at a neighbourhood level, and/or in delivery, that may otherwise have reduced their housing choice in some areas. This may be particularly relevant in respect of C3 affordable housing which some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups are more in need of given ongoing labour market inequalities and other impacts of discrimination. (Positive)

Guidance helping to foster the design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This should in turn help to promote a culture of equality, and reduce poverty and social exclusion that disproportionately affect some ethnic groups, helping to foster good relations within the neighbourhood. (Positive)

People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds may experience harassment in public spaces. The guidance encourages activation and surveillance of through routes and other public spaces and collaborative efforts to address community safety and well-being. This should help address vulnerability and help people feel safer and more secure in public spaces. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2 (a)
- 2 (b)
- 2 (c)
- 3

Religion or belief

Potential positive impacts and scores

To the extent that households holding certain religious beliefs belong disproportionately to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, they are likely to experience similar impacts to those identified for people with these ethnic backgrounds. (Positive)

Inclusive design guidance within the document encourages consideration of students' worship needs and other religious practices (e.g., relating to cooking/food storage) in the design and management of spaces. This should benefit those for whom such religious practice in or close to their place of residence is important. The guidance suggesting that a management plan includes details of marketing to raise awareness of inclusive design features to broaden the demographic reach of the accommodation, should also help reinforce this. (Positive)

Considering resident and visitor needs in the provision of communal facilities should enable social interaction between people with different characteristics. In this way it should improve social inclusion and foster mutual understanding. (Positive)

Guidance regarding design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods, through the design and management of LSPBSL, will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This in turn should help to promote a culture of equality and reduce poverty and social exclusion, which disproportionately affect some communities. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2 (a)
- 2 (b)
- 2 (c)
- 3

Sex

Potential positive impacts and scores

Women may experience harassment and other threats in public spaces. The guidance encourages activation and surveillance of through routes and other public spaces and collaborative efforts to address community safety and well-being. This should help address vulnerability and help women feel safer and more secure in public spaces. (Positive)

Women may also benefit from the alleviation of private sector rent pressures given the gender pay gap, and particularly if lone parents. Female-headed lone parent households are more likely to be residing in temporary housing having been made homeless, often due to rising private sector rents. (Positive)

This benefit may also arise from guidance addressing imbalances in housing mix and delivery, which may have reduced choice in some areas. This may be particularly relevant in respect of C3 affordable housing which some women are more in need of given women are more likely to be economically inactive, low paid, and/or subject to the poverty that affects single parent families. This should contribute to neighbourhoods that are more mixed and inclusive, and address social exclusion and poverty. (Positive)

Guidance helping to foster the design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners and in turn help to promote a culture of equality, and reduce poverty and social exclusion that disproportionately affect some women. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2 (a)
- 3

Sexual orientation

Potential positive impacts and scores

Those who are LGBTQ+ may be more likely to experience harassment in public spaces. The guidance encourages activation and surveillance of through routes and other public spaces and collaborative efforts to address community safety and well-being. This should help address vulnerability and help people feel safer and more secure in public spaces. (Positive)

Being able to access PBSA may also better enable LGBTQ+ students to access support and community relevant to their needs (such as higher rates of poor mental health and family estrangement) compared with living in the private rental sector. This may in turn affect their higher education continuation, progression and achievement. (Positive)

Guidance suggesting provision and sensitive allocation of LGBTQ+ only rooms should help address some of the well-being issues experienced by such students who may wish to have spaces of retreat amongst the LGBTQ+ community. It is recognised however, that this should be balanced with communal spaces open to all, and not all such students will want to pursue this separation, and that there are also benefits of interaction (see below). (Positive)

Considering resident and visitor needs in the provision of communal facilities should enable social interaction between people with different characteristics. In this way, it should improve social inclusion and foster mutual understanding. (Positive)

Guidance regarding design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods, through the design and management of PBSA, will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2 (b)
- 3

People on low incomes[4]

Potential positive impacts and scores

Students from low-income backgrounds are likely to benefit from increased access to ASA and the impact this may have on wider access to opportunity brought about by being able to live away from their family home and access the higher education course of their choice. This may also help them stay on their course and attain higher levels of achievement by reducing cost pressures. (Strong positive)

Low-income groups may also benefit from the indirect impact of alleviating of pressures on the private rental sector where many are concentrated and where many are particularly vulnerable to homelessness given their income situation and ongoing increases to rents. (Positive)

People from low-income backgrounds may also benefit from the guidance on housing-mix considerations that can help address imbalances at a neighbourhood level, and/or in delivery, that may otherwise have reduced their housing choice in some areas. This may be particularly relevant in respect of C3 affordable housing, which some low-income groups are more in need of. (Positive)

Guidance helping to foster the design and curation of successful mixed-use inclusive neighbourhoods will help address the employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This should in turn help to promote a culture of equality, and reduce poverty and social exclusion arising from income status. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2(a)
- 2 (c)
- 3

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[4] The socio-economic duty was introduced into legislation as Section 1 of the Act, with the aim of ensuring that public bodies had to take socio-economic disadvantage into account when making strategic decisions. However, following a change in government in 2010, the new coalition government decided not to implement the socio-economic duty. Though not a protected characteristic in the Act, the GLA recognises that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant contributor to inequality across London and therefore considers equality impacts on people on low incomes as part of its decision making.

Other groups such as carers, refugees and asylum seekers, looked after children, care leavers, UK Armed Forces Veterans, homeless people and rough sleepers and ex-offenders / people with experience of the criminal justice system.

Potential positive impacts and scores

People with vulnerabilities including refugees and asylum seekers are identified as disproportionately housed in the private rental sector, and in the lowest income third. Therefore these groups may benefit from more PBSA that indirectly alleviates pressure on the private rental sector. This may help address upward pressure on rents and competition that affects people's disposable income and propensity to homelessness. (Positive)

Insofar as carers, refugees, care leavers, homeless people and rough sleepers, and ex-offenders are all groups that are more likely to fall into low-income brackets or experience difficulties with housing and workspace costs, the guidance could have positive effects. Provision of ASA may benefit students from these groups who may otherwise not be able to afford to go to university with the benefits this brings. (Positive)

Being able to access PBSA also may enable those students to be better supported with their particular needs than in the wider private rental sector, with potential impacts on continuation and achievement. (Positive)

Similarly, advising of housing-mix considerations can help address imbalances at a neighbourhood level, and/or in delivery, that may otherwise have reduced the housing choice in some areas. This may be particularly relevant in respect of C3 affordable housing, which many of these groups should be able to benefit from - given their priority status on council housing waiting lists. (Positive)

More generally, guidance helping to foster the design and curation of successful mixed-use, mixed tenure inclusive neighbourhoods, will help address the housing, employment and social infrastructure needs of all Londoners. This should in turn help to promote a culture of equality and good community relations, and reduce poverty and social exclusion. (Positive)

Potential neutral impacts and scores

The guidance advises that infrastructure impacts should be considered, and addressed, as part of ensuring the scale of the development does not adversely impact anyone's ability to to access the local infrastructure they need. This should avoid any adverse impacts. (Neutral)

Potential negative impacts, mitigations or objective justification and scores

No impacts identified.

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1
- 2 (a)
- 2 (b)
- 2 (c)
- 3

2.2 Overview of equality impacts

Table 2: overview of equality impacts

Protected characteristic / group	Strongly positive impacts	Positive impacts	Neutral impacts	Negative impacts	Strong negative impacts	Mixed or uncertain impacts
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Disability	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Gender reassignment	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Marriage and civil partnership	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
Pregnancy and maternity	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
Race	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Religion and belief	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Sex	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Sexual orientation	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
People on low incomes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Other groups	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-

Cumulative impacts

Cumulative, aggregate and in-combination impacts have been considered; and, where relevant, seem generally likely to reinforce positive benefits. For instance, the combination of design and management features, and marketing material that highlights these is likely

to raise awareness of them amongst those that may benefit from them, perhaps encouraging more take-up of the opportunities presented.

3 Amendments

No further changes made due to overall positive impacts. However, note the amendments highlighted in the introduction that have addressed equalities concerns raised in the consultation.

4 Recommendation

The EqIA of this draft guidance proposed for publication (which has been updated post-consultation) has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken. As such officers recommend that the guidance can be published in its proposed form.

5 Monitoring

Monitoring will take place through the London Plan Annual Monitoring Report and wider monitoring of the Mayor's other strategies, as well as part of reviewing the London Plan. The evidence base on student housing need (including composition by group characteristic) will continue to be developed and further help to identify and monitor relevant trends.

6 Appendix A: Evidence Reference and Content

6.1 Evidence

Age

In terms of student affordability, the average annual rent of a room in London takes up 88 per cent of the maximum loan amount[5].

Most students in England are under 24 (38 per cent are under 20, and a further 28 per cent are 20-24)[6]

Young people are more likely to be unemployed than adults aged between 25 and 64[7].

Younger Londoners face higher housing costs than older groups: those aged 16-49 spend an average of 29 per cent of their net income on housing costs, compared to 24 per cent for those aged 50-64 and 17 per cent for those aged 65 or more[8].

Rates of overcrowding are higher in London than anywhere else in the country. Households with children are more likely to be overcrowded than households with no children. In London, 26 per cent of all households with dependent children are considered overcrowded, according to the bedroom standard measure, compared to 4.2 per cent of households without dependent children[9]

In March 2024 there were 65280 homeless households living in temporary accommodation arranged by London boroughs, including 86810 children[10]. Households with dependent children comprise one third of all households accepted as statutorily homeless, and 22 per cent of such households are female headed[11].

Under 24s are now less likely than previously to live in the private rental sector; and are more likely to still live at home due to rising costs. Older people are an increasing proportion of private renters[12].

A higher proportion of older Household Reference Persons aged 65 and over own, rather than rent, their home (67 per cent with 33 per cent); though 25 per cent live in social rented housing[13].

Disability

16 per cent of students enrolled in England have a known disability[14] . Engagement with PBSA providers and HEPs has found that they note this is primarily neurological (such as dyslexia) and mental health related.

[5] Unipol Unipol [triennial] Accommodation Costs Survey 2021/22

[6] HESA HE enrolments data for 2021/2 (2022/23 data not yet available)

[7] ONS Unemployment numbers and rates by equalities group LFS, London Datastore April 2024

[8] Resolution Foundation, Intergenerational audit for the UK: Data dashboard, 2020

[9] ONS, Census 2021: Household Composition Occupancy Rating by region

[10] MHCLG (2024) Live Homelessness Tables, quarterly release, table TA1

[11] MHCLG (2024) Live Homelessness Tables, annual release, table A5R

[12] UK private rented sector data (2018).

[13] ONS, Census 2021: Household composition, occupancy rating for bedrooms and tenure of household

[14] HESA HE enrolment stats 2021/22.

13.2 per cent of 20-24 year olds and 11.3 per cent of 15-19 year olds have a disability, and 3.9 per cent of both these age groups have a disability that limits them a lot (wheelchair users are more likely to fall within this category)[15]. In London, the proportion of population aged 20-24 that has a disability is 10 per cent, (8.5 per cent for 15-19 year olds) and 2.9 per cent (3 per cent for 15-19 year olds) have a disability that limits them a lot[16].

The Office for Students identifies that disabled students are more likely to experience cost pressure; lack of choice of institution/course; and lack of wider higher education 'capacity' (e.g., suitable housing). This affects their access to higher education, continuation, progression and achievement[17].

Disabled people are more likely to live in the social rented sector compared with their non-disabled counterparts:

- Nearly 1 in 4 (24.9 per cent) disabled people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK rent social housing compared with fewer than 1 in 10 (7.9 per cent) non-disabled people[18],
- In London this proportion rises to nearly 1 in 3 (30 per cent) [19]

The proportion of disabled people living with parents rose from 12.4 per cent in 2013/14 to 16.4 per cent in 2020/21. By contrast, the proportion of non-disabled people living with parents was more or less unchanged (up 1 per cent from 18.2 per cent in 2013/14 to 19.2 per cent in 2020/21)[20].

Households in London where at least one member uses a wheelchair some or all of the time are more likely to be dissatisfied with their accommodation than households where no one uses a wheelchair.[20]

Deaf and disabled residents are more likely to be living in poverty: 36 per cent of Londoners who live in families where someone is disabled are living in poverty after housing costs, compared to 26 per cent of those in families where no-one is disabled[21].

Gender reassignment

The Office for Students notes that students that report that their gender identity is not the same as their sex registered at birth are more likely to experience mental ill health[22] which may affect their continuation, progression and achievement in higher education.

Research by HEPI[23] found that trans and non-binary students face multiple financial challenges related to their protected characteristics and higher levels of loneliness and other challenges to their well-being than other students.

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[15] ONS Disability in England and Wales, 2021 Table 2
[16] ONS Disability in England and Wales, 2021 ONS, Table 4
[17] Office for Students Equality of Opportunity Risk Register undated
[18] ONS Outcomes for disabled people in the UK 2021
[19] ONS Table 6: Housing Situation of people aged 16 to 64 by disability status and English region, Disability and Housing UK 2021
[20] ONS, Table 6: Housing Situation of people aged 16 to 64 by disability status and English region, 2021
[21] GLA analysis of Households Below Average Income data (End User dataset) quoted in EqIA of the Affordable Homes Programme, 2021-26)).
[22] Office for Students Equality of Opportunity Risk Register undated
[23] HEPI Trans-and-non-binary-student-experiences-in-higher-education.pdf (hepi.ac.uk) 2024

Stonewall research in 2018 found that 25 per cent of trans/non-binary survey respondents were discriminated against when looking for a house or flat to rent or buy in the previous year. In the survey, 20 per cent reported that they had experienced discrimination while looking for a new home[24].

In 2022/2023, 4732 Hate crimes against transgender people were recorded by the Police, an increase of 11 per cent from the previous year[25]. This number considered to be underreported (out of 108,100 responses to the National LGBT Survey, 88 per cent of transgender people said they did not report the most serious type of incident). Transgender people are more likely to experience threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence compared with the LGBT community as a whole.[26]

Marriage or civil partnership

No relevant data

Pregnancy and maternity

No relevant data

Race

The Office for Students identifies that students from some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group backgrounds are less likely to access higher education, and students from mixed ethnic backgrounds are more likely to experience mental ill health that may affect their continuation, progression and achievement in higher education[27].

The number of domestic compared to international students enrolled in higher education in the UK in the academic year 2022/23 is as follows[28]:
- UK students: 2,175,530 (74 per cent)
- EU students: 95,505 (3 per cent)
- Students from beyond the EU: 663,355 (23 per cent)

In London, most EU students are from France, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Germany; and most Non-EU international students are from China, India and Nigeria.

On average, Black Londoners and those from most other minority ethnic groups experience worse housing conditions, less tenure security, higher rates of housing need, worse affordability and lower wealth than White Londoners.

39 per cent of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group Londoners live in relative poverty after housing costs, compared to 21 per cent of White Londoners[29]

2023 surveys found that Londoners from a Black or Asian ethnic background were more likely than people from White, other or mixed ethnicity backgrounds to have struggled to

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[24] Stonewall, LGBT in Britain – Trans Report, 2018

[25] Home Office (2023) Hate Crime in England and Wales, 2nd edition (annual release)
[26] Government Equalities Office National LGBT Survey Research Report 2019
[27] Office for Students Glossary entry for Underrepresented groups undated
[28] HESA Where do HE students come from? 2023
[29] GLA analysis of Households Below Average Income data (End User dataset), Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026 Equality Impact Assessment)

meet housing payments in the last six months. They were also less confident about meeting them without a struggle in the next six months[30].

The poverty rate in London, after housing costs, was 38 per cent for Black households, and 33 per cent for Asian households, compared to 18per cent for White household. For single parents it was 47 per cent. Poverty rates also varied significantly across London's boroughs.[31]

So whilst there is a problem of relative low income (household income before housing costs) in populations with a Black, Asian and mixed/other minority ethnic background, these groups are also more affected by London's high housing costs than White Londoners, as illustrated in the chart below. This particularly shows the issue within the private rental sector, (where students are more likely to reside) and the insulating effect of home ownership.[32]

Median of housing costs as a proportion of household income, London and rest of UK 2015-16 to 2019-20. Source: Households Below Average Income

Black households in London are significantly more likely than those of other ethnicities to report moving because their landlord ended the tenancy or evicted them. They are also more likely to say they expect to be treated worse by private landlords than people of other races[33].

Households headed by someone who is Black are around 150 per cent more likely to be owed a homelessness duty.[34] 1.6 per cent of all householders in London were assessed as owed a homelessness duty in London in 2019- 20, but this rate varies enormously by ethnicity – from less than one in every 1,000 for Chinese, Indian and White British households to four or five in every 100 for Black and Mixed ethnicity households. 17 per cent of Black households living in private rented or social housing in London say they have been homeless at some point in their lives, compared to 8 per cent of Asian households, 6 per cent of White households and 9 per cent of mixed/other ethnic minority households[35].

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[30] GLA, Housing in London 2023, October 2023
[31] Trust for London, Who is in poverty in London?, 21 July 2023 (using 2021-22 data)
[32] GLA, Housing and race equality in London: An analysis of secondary data, March 2022
[33] GLA, Housing and race equality in London: An analysis of secondary data, March 2022 (using English Housing Survey 2014-18)
[34] GLA Housing and Land, Housing in London 2023, October 2023
[35] GLA, Housing and race equality in London: An analysis of secondary data, March 2022 (using data from the English Housing Survey and the DLUHC)

Households that were not from a White British ethnic background in the three years to 2021 were 60 per cent more likely to be overcrowded than the London average.[33] More specifically, Londoners from Bangladeshi and Black African backgrounds were among those most likely to say they are living in crowded homes [36].

English Housing Survey data (2015-17) shows that, in every ethnic group, private renters were the most likely to live in homes below the decent homes standard; and Black and Asian households in private rented housing were particularly likely to live in 'non-decent' homes[37].

Religion or belief

To the extent that Londoners holding particular religious beliefs belong disproportionately to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (Census 2021), the relevant data overlaps.

There has been limited data releases with the breakdown in relation to housing statistics, but people of Muslim faith are disproportionately likely to be homeless (19 per cent of homeless people are Muslim, compared to 15 per cent of the population)[38]. This is also the case with housing deprivation more generally, which shows 35 per cent of Muslim-only households are deprived in one or more domain (over-crowding, no central heading, shared dwelling) compared to an average of 17 per cent for all other households with any other single religion or no religion[39].

Sex

71 per cent of women surveyed for a report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for UN Women stated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space, and among 18-24 years olds, the figure was even higher at 86 per cent[40].

Female-headed lone-parent households in London comprise 22 per cent of all households accepted as statutory homelessness in 2022-23 (compared to 2 per cent of male-headed lone-parent households). Single males comprise 38 per cent per cent of households assessed as owed a duty[41].

The London Housing Committee found that the gender pay gap means women earning a median income need to spend 63 per cent of their earnings to afford the median private rent in London, compared to 49 per cent for men[42]. This means upward pressures on private rents make them ever more unaffordable for women.

[36] GLA, Housing in London 2022, October 2022 (from 2021-22 London survey data).
[37] GLA Housing and Land, Housing and race equality in London: An analysis of secondary data, March 2022
[38] ONS, People experiencing homelessness, England and Wales: Census 2021 – Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion tables, 6 December 2023
[39] ONS, Census 2021: Combination of religions in household and household deprived in the housing dimension
[40] APGG for UN Women (2021) Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces
[41] DLUHC, Tables on homelessness, last updated 30 November 2023 (annual release)
[42] London Housing Committee Women and Housing: a gap in the market, 2023

Sexual orientation

The Office for Students identifies that LBQT+ students are more likely to experience mental ill health, which may affect their higher education continuation, progression and achievement[43].

In 2022-23, the police recorded 24 102 hate crimes related to sexual orientation across England and Wales[44]. Over two-thirds of same-sex couples have modified their behaviour in public towards their partner (for example, avoided hand-holding) for fear of hate crime[45].

People on low incomes

The Office for Students identifies that people from low-income backgrounds are less likely to access higher education, and students from this background are more likely to experience a lack of choice of course, cost pressures and mental ill health which may also affect continuation, progression and achievement[46]

The proportion of Londoners saying they were 'financially struggling' increased from 12 per cent in January 2022 to 17 per cent in January 2023, a level which was sustained into January 2024. In January 2024, 51 per cent of Londoners said they struggled to pay for food and essential items, up from 39 per cent in January 2022.[47] Londoners living in social rented accommodation, (49 per cent) followed by those in private rented accommodation (34 per cent) are most likely to live in poverty, though a greater and increasing proportion of Londoners in poverty are now private renters (40 per cent)[48].

Despite higher average incomes, more expensive housing means that the poverty rate in London almost doubles when housing costs are taken into account (from 14 per cent to 24 per cent). This is a situation worse than any other region in the UK[49]. Poverty rates after housing costs are even higher in most Inner London boroughs (over 27 per cent over a 5 year period excluding 2020/21)[50]. Child poverty is most acute in wards in Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham and Hackney.[51]

For some groups, the rate was even higher; the poverty rate after housing costs amongst Bangladeshi households in London was 63 per cent[52], and for single parents it was 47 per cent[53].

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[43] Office for Students - Equality of Opportunity Risk Register undated

[44] Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition, updated 2 November 2023 (annual release)

[45] Government Equalities Office, National LGBT Survey: Research report, updated 7 February 2019

[46] Office for Students glossary entry for Underrepresented groups

[47] See GLA Poll Results at London Datastore

[48] Trust for London (2024) Number of People in Poverty by Household Tenure 2024, data for 2004/05-2022/23

[49] Trust for London Poverty Rates by Region 2024

[50] Trust for London Poverty Rates by London Borough 2023

[51] Trust for London Overview of London Boroughs 2024

[52] Trust for London Proportion of Households in Poverty by Ethnicity 2022-23 2024

[53]Trust for London Proportion of Households in Poverty by Family Type 2022-23 2024

In 2022, 17 per cent of Londoners were in persistent poverty, compared to 12 per cent nationally[54]. In 2022-2023, almost a third of single pensioners lived in poverty, as did 47 per cent of lone parent households.[55]

Other groups

Asylum seekers and refugees

Asylum seekers have rapidly increased in the last few years, nationally and in London[56]. Accommodation provision is typically through hotel (initial) and private rental (dispersed) contracts as asylum seekers do not have access to other housing until they are granted refugee status. At this point, the rapid withdrawal of direct state support (within 28 days) can often lead to homelessness, given lack of time to find employment and linked to this, alternative accommodation[57].

Research from 2018 found that refugees and asylum seekers in the bottom one third of income groups (before housing costs), are disproportionately housed in the private rental sector[58].

According to the 2021 census, Londoners whose first language is not English make up 35.1 per cent of those who are homeless – but only 26.6 per cent of the overall population. This disproportionality is more pronounced among those with the least proficiency in English, who constitute 11.8 per cent of those who are homeless but only 4.2 per cent of the overall population.[59] This is likely to be a partial proxy for asylum seekers and refugees who may have had less opportunity to gain language fluency.

Carers

The current cost-of-living crisis means that carers are facing unprecedented pressure on their finances: 25 per cent are cutting back on essentials such as food or heating and 63 per cent are extremely worried about managing their monthly costs[60].

In addition, caring also comes with additional costs that can have a significant impact on carers' finances and many carers suffer financial hardship. 44 per cent of working-age adults who are caring for 35 hours or more a week are in poverty[61]. Carer's Allowance is the main carer's benefit and is the lowest benefit of its kind.

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[54] Trust for London Poverty in London before and After the Covid19 Pandemic 2022

[55] Trust for London Who is in poverty in London? 2024

[56] London Councils, Asylum Seekers and refugees in London; House of Commons Library, Asylum statistics, 24 May 2024

[57] Refugee Council, Top facts from the latest statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum

[58] University of York Centre for Housing Policy, Vulnerability amongst Low-Income Households in the Private Rented Sector in England, 2018

[59] ONS People experiencing homelessness, England and Wales: Census 2021 – Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion tables, 6 December 2023

[60] Carers UK, State of Caring 2022 report, November 2022

[61] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2022, January 2022

Being a carer also links to sex as a protected characteristic, as unpaid carers are more likely to be women (who make up 59 per cent of unpaid carers)[62].

In terms of housing, a 2016 report by Carers UK found:

- One in five carers (18 per cent) are waiting for adaptations to be made to their homes
- 10 per cent said that their home was in poor condition, damp or disrepair, rising to 15 per cent of carers renting privately
- 15 per cent said there isn't enough space for someone to provide overnight care, rising to 19 per cent of carers living in social housing
- 13 per cent said that as a result of caring there isn't enough space to live comfortably, rising to 18 per cent of carers living in social housing.

Veterans

Only a small minority of the Armed Forces community will need to access the housing services provided by the housing bodies subject to the Duty (section 4A). However, there are likely to be disproportionate numbers needing specialist adapted housing, which may be particularly lacking. Some are at increased risk of homelessness, lacking the knowledge of the civilian housing sector, welfare system and budgeting, and being reluctant to seek help early[63].

Care leavers

Poor housing options and provision for care leavers persists. Such housing is often far from social networks and comprised of stressful environments that have knock-on effects for mental health[64].

The Office for Students identifies that care leavers are underrepresented in terms of access to higher education and are more likely to be affected by cost pressures.[65]

Looked after children

There is concern for distribution of housing options, including sufficient in-borough provision (including foster care) which is likely to correlate with the availability of affordable housing. Statutory guidance assumes that foster carers can access the homes they need, including affordable homes, in each borough[66]. Given the need for affordable homes across London seems unlikely to be the case. However, further evidence is however needed.

Homelessness

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[62] Census 2021

[63] Ministry of Defence, Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty November 2022

[64] The Care Leavers' Association/Department of Health, Caring for Better Health December 2017

[65] Office for Students Equality of Opportunity Risk Register; Office for Students glossary entry for underrepresented groups undated

[66] Department for Children, Schools and Families, Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children 2010

The number of individuals seen sleeping rough in London rose substantially in 2022-23, to over 10,000. This continues a long-term trend[67]. More than 65,000 homeless households were being housed by London's local authorities in temporary accommodation at the end of March 2024.[68]

6.2 Gaps in evidence

Data on students segmented by protected characteristic and linked to London higher education providers is not publicly available at this time. For now, for many groups England-wide data and risk assessments have been used.

LGBTQ+ and gender reassignment

There is a lack of data on the extent to which those identifying as LGBTQ+, or undergoing gender reassignment, find it harder to access suitable housing they can afford compared with other groups. This makes it difficult to reliably identify potential impacts.

Marriage and civil partnership

No data has been found detailing the extent to which this characteristic correlates with accessing suitable housing and related inclusive neighbourhood needs.

Pregnancy and maternity

No data has been found detailing the extent to which this characteristic correlates with accessing suitable housing and related inclusive neighbourhood needs.

7 Appendix B: Engagement summary

7.1 Summary of groups engaged

Already engaged:
The consultation on the document, including the associated EqIA, was widely publicised, with several 'open to all' stakeholder events, as well as some more targeted sessions with Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) that are also bound by Equalities Act duties. As the consultation report sets out, there is limited information on the demographics of participants, including protected characteristics, as this was not recorded at events; and in the online survey relevant monitoring questions did not receive sufficient responses. However, several additional equalities issues were raised in this process, suggesting that this is nonetheless a helpful process.

Future engagement:

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[67] DLUHC, Tables on homelessness, last updated 30 November 2023 (annual)

[68] MHCLG Tables on homelessness, quarterly release August 2024 Detailed Local Authority Tables table TA1

The London Plan team continues to work to broaden its engagement reach, including through the Planning for London programme. Relevant information will be drawn into the monitoring process and used to update the LPG as necessary.

7.2 Engagement record

The detailed engagement record is to be found in the LPG consultation report.

In summary, of 39 respondents, 44 per cent would have been subject to the PSED (LPAs and HEPs). In addition, several responses came from those with accessibility expertise.

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Business excluding providers & developers	3	8per cent
PBSA providers/investors	12	31 per cent
Other developers	2	5 per cent
Higher education provider (HEP)	5	13 per cent
Campaign/interest group	2	5 per cent
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	12	31 per cent
Statutory consultee/professional body	2	5 per cent
Individual	1	3 per cent
Total	**39**	**Rounded numbers so sums to just over 100**

While other engagement did take place, the consultation survey was the main source of input around equalities issues given specific questions on the implications of the guidance for different groups with protected characteristics, and the adequacy of the EqIA that accompanied the consultation draft of the guidance.

The pre-consultation EqIA highlighted the intention to contact student advocacy groups associated with particular protected characteristics such as disability. However, despite repeated attempts to engage with these, this has not proved to be possible, with some suggestion that they are not currently active. As a result, the assessment has relied on the expertise and advocacy of others, and secondary data such as the reports highlighted in the evidence section.

8 Appendix C: Legal context

8.1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced the pre-existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The legislation covers the exercise of public functions; employment and work; goods and services; premises; associations; transport and education.

The Act prohibits victimisation and harassment, and all of the following forms of discrimination: direct; indirect; by association; by perception; or arising from disability.

The Act recognises nine protected characteristics:

1. Age

A person having a particular age or being within an age group. This includes all ages, including children and young people.

2. Disability

A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Certain medical conditions are automatically classed as being a disability, for example, cancer, HIV infection, multiple sclerosis.

3. Gender reassignment

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

4. Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

Couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Act).

Marriage and civil partnership are a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

5. Pregnancy or maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

6. Race

In the Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current

nationality. For example, you may have Chinese national origins and be living in Britain with a British passport.

Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race.

7. Religion or belief

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief (including ethical veganism) and includes a lack of belief (for example, atheism).

8. Sex

A man or a woman.

9. Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Though not a protected group in the Act, the GLA recognises that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant contributor to inequality across London and therefore regards people on low incomes as an additional group against which to assess equality impacts.

8.1 Public Sector Equality Duty aims

The PSED set out at section 149 of the Act requires public bodies, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the following:

- aim 1: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- aim 2: advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- aim 3: foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The first aim means the giving advance consideration to discrimination issues before making policy decisions. It relates particularly to scrutinising policies, practices or decisions that could result in discrimination or other prohibited conduct.[69]

Having due regard to second aim involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- 2(a): remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- 2(b): take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- 2(c): encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

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[69] EHRC Technical Guidance

Having due regard to the third aim involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- 3(a): tackle prejudice
- 3(b): promote understanding.

The three aims of the duty are known as the 'general equality duty'. They must be fulfilled before and at the time of exercising a public function and on a continuing basis by the GLA when exercising its functions. Each aim must be considered in turn: for example, the obligation to have due regard to advancing equality is quite separate from the obligation to have due regard to eliminating discrimination.

Digital Connectivity Infrastructure London Plan Guidance

Consultation Summary Report

October 2024

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Table of contents

1   Introduction

Between 19 October 2023 and 11 January 2024, the Greater London Authority (GLA) carried out a formal consultation on the Mayor's draft Digital Connectivity Infrastructure London Plan Guidance (DCI LPG).

This report summarises the survey responses received during the consultation period. These responses came from an online survey; submitted emails; and stakeholder event comments and questions. Three online events were held through the consultation period, for Londoners to learn more about the draft DCI LPG and ask questions. Appendices 1 and 2 break down all the consultation and engagement activity held since the draft LPG was published.

The report identifies the key issues raised in the draft LPG consultation; and sets out the GLA's response. This response has been informed, in part, by follow-up conversations with stakeholders, including the digital industry and local planning authorities (LPAs). The Mayor would like to thank everyone who took part and engaged with the guidance.

2   Who took part?

During the consultation period there were 40 attendees at the virtual events; 675 visits to the consultation platform; and 232 document downloads. Of the 13 questionnaire responses received, nine were sent through the dedicated online survey. Of these, one was sent via both the online survey and email. The remaining four were sent directly by email, rather than the engagement platform.

Respondents were asked what type of organisation they represent, or whether they were responding as an individual. A list of the organisations that responded to the formal consultation can be found in Appendix 1.

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Individual	2	15%
Business	1	8%
Campaign group	1	8%
Community group	1	8%
Government body or agency	1	8%
Local authority outside London	0	0%
London borough	5	38%
Professional body	2	15%
Total	**13**	**100%**

Representations were received from three organisations focused on groups with protected characteristics: London Gypsies and Travellers; the Equality and Human Rights Network; and the London Digital Inclusion Network.

This LPG draft was informed by early informal engagement (in January/February 2023) with key stakeholders to scope the key issues. Insight and evidence were gained from over 50 interviews with a broad range of stakeholders, including LPAs; mobile and broadband operators; developers; and others. Following on from this, the formal engagement with key stakeholders took place between October 2023 and January 2024. These have collectively helped shape the iteration of the draft DCI LPG. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute.

3   Respondent demographics

Respondents were asked for equality-monitoring information to assess how they compared to the demographics of Londoners. We received limited responses to these questions; therefore, the relevant analysis has not been included in this report. Other engagement was undertaken prior to the formal consultation, including technical meetings with consultants, borough officers and industry representatives. Equality-monitoring information was not collected for these engagements.

4   Consultation feedback and GLA response

4.1   Summary of DCI LPG consultation responses

As part of the consultation on the draft guidance, respondents were asked to submit answers to a survey (combining specific and more open questions) through the GLA's online consultation portal. There were 47 questions, of which 18 were closed-ended tick-box style and 29 were open-ended comment style (see Appendix 3). As the main purpose of the report is to highlight the key qualitative issues raised, the analysis focuses more on responses to the open-ended questions. Tables showing responses to the closed-ended questions are included where they can supplement or contrast with the issues being discussed in the relevant section. Some respondents chose to submit email responses – not all of which used the survey questions as headings. Therefore, this section is organised by issue, mirroring the structure of the draft LPG. Where relevant, we indicate the support for a position where this was discernible through a specific question.

Responses on the scope – how the LPG will be applied

This section summarises all the feedback relating to the scope of the LPG, covered by questions 1 to 7.

Question 1: Is there any other type of development that has not been listed here to which this guidance is applicable?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	1	13%
No	6	75%
Don't know	1	13%
Total	**8**	**100%**

Most respondents to this question were satisfied with the types of developments the LPG will apply to.

Question 3: Building Regulations (part R) have now covered fully the requirements set out in London Plan policy SI 6 A(1) and therefore its requirements are not covered again in this guidance. Do you agree with this position?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	88%
No	1	13%
Don't know	0	0%
Total	**8**	**100%**

Most respondents to this question agreed that that Building Regulations (part R) fully cover the requirements set out in London Plan policy SI 6 A (1), and therefore saw no need to cover this again in the LPG.

Question 5: Do you agree this guidance should also apply to digital infrastructure development prior approval notifications?

All nine respondents to this question agreed that the LPG should be applicable to DCI prior approval notifications.

Key matters raised in relation to the scope of the LPG – comments merged for open-ended questions 2, 4, 6 and 7:

- The guidance should apply to all non-major applications and all DCI/non-DCI prior approval applications.

- The guidance should apply to all development proposals.

- Planning policy and guidance should avoid repeating Building Regulations, as this creates an overdetailed and complex framework.

- The reference to 'masts, antennae or other apparatus that are not permitted development will require prior approval notifications' is incorrect and should be deleted.

- Reference to all stand-alone DCI is not clear, and is not recognised by the industry. It should be amended. Additional points were made suggesting revising and clarifying definitions and terminology.

GLA response:

- We reviewed evidence on the potential application of this LPG to different types of planning application. However, we considered that a blanket application to all planning application types, and to all non-DCI prior approvals, would not have a meaningful impact. The LPG seeks to strike a balance; and gives LPAs the discretion to set their own thresholds for when the LPG should apply if deemed necessary.

- New Building Regulations (Part R) emerged in December 2022 (after the current London Plan was adopted in 2021). These overlapped with elements that were covered in London Plan policy SI 6 A (1). Thus, it was considered appropriate for the LPG to avoid duplicating this.

- The current wording has been reviewed, and some minor changes made to clarify the types of development to which the LPG would apply (as noted in page 1 of the DCI LPG). The requirements of S16 A part 4 (set out in Section 2 of the guidance) will remain only applicable and relevant to DCI prior approvals under Part 16 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any other such future Order).

- For clarity, all reference to stand-alone DCI has been replaced with 'individual DCI'. Additional points suggesting clarified definitions and terminology resulted in some minor wording amendments to the footnotes and glossary.

Responses for Section 1 – Supporting information required with planning application submission

This section summarises all the feedback on questions 8 to 12, relating to the supporting information required with planning applications.

Question 8: Do you agree with the suggested supporting information for planning applications?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	3	33%
No	4	44%
Don't know	2	22%
Total	**9**	**100%**

The responses suggest neither strong support for, nor opposition to, the information requirements set out in Section 1 of the LPG. However, related comments are summarised below.

Key matters raised – comments merged for open-ended questions 9, 11 and 12:

- There was support for the requirement for an **evidence checklist** with the planning application submission. This could be useful in supporting consistency for all key stakeholders.

- It was suggested that requiring the submission of **visuals and photomontages** with planning applications could provide a better understanding of the impact of DCI development proposals.

- There was support for **proactive engagement** with local communities and, specifically, digital inclusion groups and forums.

- There was concern raised over the requirement for applicants of major developments to consult all mobile operators that have **mast sites within 250m** of a proposal. It was suggested that it should be better dealt with via planning condition.

- There was a recommendation that **WiredScore**[1] should only be needed where it is highlighted at the pre-application stage.

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[1] WiredScore standard assesses and certifies digital connectivity and smart technologies to help improve connectivity and user experiences in buildings

- It was suggested that developments should have to show that the DCI is capable of provide service to at least 'good' or 'fair' standards, using the Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP), Reference Signal Received Quality (RSRQ) and Signal to Noise Ratio (SINR) signal-strength measures.[2]

- There was a suggestion the **LPG should avoid duplication** with other existing regulations, policy or standards. These include the National Policy Planning Framework, Code for Wireless Network development, and Construction Design and Management regulations.

- There was a suggestion to encourage **DCI on less prominent sites** by prioritising areas such as car parks and business parks over residential sites.

GLA responses:

- It is important to clarify that not all the information requirements listed in Section 1 will be required with every application; a checklist could be misleading in this way. Sections 1.3 and 1.4 could, however, still serve as a useful list of prompts for applicants. To avoid being overly prescriptive, no further checklists are offered here. We also note that 'The Code for Wireless Network development in England'[3] guidance document covers DCI requirements in greater depth. This LPG has only sought to signpost other regulations and industry standards where appropriate; but we acknowledge that, as a result, there are some overlaps in the coverage of themes. In addition, Annex B of 'The Code for Wireless Network development'[4] provides a DCI-specific supplementary information template that could serve as an appropriate complementary checklist.

- The submission of visuals and photomontages has been added to Section 1, acknowledging this is an existing best practice demonstrated in some planning applications and/or accompanying planning statements.

- The importance of community engagement is already acknowledged in Section 1. However, wording has been added to state that, where community consultation is not possible, it will be the responsibility of developers and/or applicants to provide a written justification. They will be responsible for contacting appropriate network providers and local authorities for site selection and differing types of DCI installations locally.

- The 250m rule was suggested as a minimum radius distance for best practice, to support a more comprehensive consultation process to identify any potential connectivity issues and/or gaps nearby. Section 3 outlines approaches that could help developers identify site locations. The wording has not changed, and

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[2] RSRP is used as a vital measure in cellular networks for coverage; RSRQ is used for capacity; and SINR is used for interference.
[3] The Code for Wireless Network development in England
[4] The Code for Wireless Network development in England

acknowledges that LPAs can and already do use planning conditions at their discretion, where needed.

- It will be at the discretion of developers and applicants to put forward WiredScore or any other equivalent standards, and any accompanying supporting statements explaining how they meet connectivity requirements. These can be submitted as part of the information requirements supplementing their application at any stage in the process.

- Wording has been added in Section 1.4, in response to the recommendation that developments evidence that the proposed DCI can achieve at least 'good' or 'fair' standards using Ofcom's signal-strength measure RSRP.[5] Whilst RSRP is referenced in the LPG, it is acknowledged that other measures for signal strength can be used.

- The aim of the LPG is only to supplement existing London Plan policy SI 6; and fill any knowledge gaps relating to the application of this policy. This LPG has only sought to signpost other regulations and industry standards where appropriate; but we acknowledge that, as a result, there are some overlaps in the coverage of themes.

- The LPG seeks to strike a balance, and gives LPAs the discretion to set their own land-use priorities in different locations based on their local contexts and needs. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for the LPG to require that preference is given to less prominent sites, by prioritising car parks and business parks over residential sites. The emphasis of Section 2 of the LPG is to encourage careful siting of DCI on all public-realm sites, regardless of their ownership, economic value or geographical position.

Question 10: Are there likely to be any unintended consequences of any aspects of the guidance set out in Section 1?

Many respondents (six out of eight total respondents) agreed that unintended consequences would likely arise from this guidance.

Key matters raised for perceived unintended consequences of Section 1 – comments merged for open-ended questions 11 and 12:

- There was concern that **inadequate community engagement could lead to objections** to development proposals.

- Greater use of rooftops and public spaces could lead to **negative design outcomes**.

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[5] RSRP is used as a vital measure in cellular networks for coverage. OFCOM has set out what it views as 'good' (100dBm) and 'fair' (110dBm) values in its method for the UK. This will be particularly relevant when reporting on mobile 5G availability predictions.

- There was concern that the level of information required in Section 1.4 could potentially cause **delays to the planning process**. Concern was also raised that the information requirements for DCI-related applications are too complex; and could lead to **disputes at the validation stage with major planning applications.**

- A concern was raised that requirements for transport and heritage assessments could lead to LPAs requiring these documents when they may not need to, leading to **unnecessary costs**.

GLA responses:

- Section 1.4 highlights the importance of early community engagement, ideally from pre-application stages onwards. The requirement to demonstrate evidence of community engagement and justifications for where that may not be possible could help foster greater community buy-in and counter objections.

- The LPG seeks to promote better design and optimise rooftops and public spaces. Its approach in highlighting the importance of early engagement between stakeholders, could help counter any negative impacts by ensuring both applicant and LPA work together as soon as possible.

- The approach set out in Section 1.4 is intended to aid the applicants in carefully selecting and submitting all the appropriate and necessary details to the LPA, enabling effective decision-making. It does not state that every application must include all the different information requirements; this will depend on the type of application being submitted, and would not preclude applicants checking with LPAs for any other local validation requirements.

- The wording in relation to transport and heritage assessments has been reviewed for clarity, but no further changes have been made.

Responses for Section 2 – Better design for DCI delivery

This section summarises all the feedback on questions 13 to 32 relating to better design for DCI delivery.

Question 13: Do you agree that building level mobile connectivity should be available throughout the development to meet the expected demand of all its end users?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	78%
No	0	0%
Don't know	2	22%
Total	**9**	**100%**

Most respondents agreed that building-level mobile connectivity should be available throughout the development to meet the expected demand of all its end users.

Key matters raised on achieving appropriate mobile connectivity – comments merged for open-ended questions 14 and 15:

- There was concern that not enough guidance was provided in the draft LPG on **how to avoid reducing mobile connectivity** for neighbouring buildings, because of an improvement in connectivity in one building.

- Linked to the above point, there was a suggestion that the LPG should highlight the importance of ensuring **in-building coverage** and connectivity – using solutions such as distributed antenna solutions (DAS) and/or other mobile signal boosters to extend in-building coverage and external connectivity from one building to the next.

GLA response:

One of the LPG's central purposes is to ensure that development proposals should seek to meet the expected demand for mobile connectivity, and to avoid worsening mobile connectivity; and mitigate any adverse impacts. Section 2.1.4 highlights the need to ensure building-level solutions, enabling adequate mobile coverage, are provided to meet expected end-user demands with any given development proposal. DAS has been referenced as one currently available solution, though it is acknowledged that other technological solutions can also be used.

Question 16: Do you agree that the guidance set out for digital infrastructure on rooftop sites will support opportunities to improve mobile connectivity of an identified area?

There was no strong agreement nor disagreement with the guidance set out for DCI provision on rooftops (as set out in Section 2.4 of LPG).

Key matters raised on DCI on rooftop sites – comments merged for open-ended question 17 and 21:

- There was a recommendation suggesting a need to ensure that **rooftop siting was not intrusive** and should meet safety requirements. Suggestions were made around the importance of mitigating the visual impact via less prominent siting; and the incorporation of equipment camouflage or screening, where feasible.

- There was a suggestion that London Plan Policy D9 on tall buildings, and the LPG, need to make it clear that any **rooftop infrastructure** should not form part of a structure's **maximum calculated storey heights**.

- There was concern that the LPG does not address understanding and mitigating the **impact of development on existing mobile DCI sites**, where they are on a building subject to redevelopment or extension.

- There was a supportive comment highlighting the importance of ensuring that all DCI applications are **future-proofed**, although it was accepted that this may not always be possible due to space constraints in some sites.

GLA responses:

- Wording has been changed throughout Section 2.4 to emphasise careful design and rooftop siting.

- It is not within the scope of the LPG to change London Plan policy D9 on tall buildings. Each borough is responsible for defining what constitutes a tall building in their area, and whether or not it includes rooftop infrastructure. However, Section 2.2 seeks to encourage development proposals to optimise the use of rooftops to accommodate better-designed, better-located mobile DCI.

- The LPG will apply to both new-builds and existing buildings in development proposals. Without being too prescriptive, applicants will need to demonstrate, with the appropriate information, that their proposals meet the expected demand for mobile connectivity for end users, whilst indicating that the proposal will not impact connectivity levels for any existing neighbours/users.

- Section 2 seeks to ensure that relevant DCI applications endeavour to future-proof (e.g., through access or space provision for future upgrades). However, it is acknowledged that this will not always be possible due to space constraints.

There was a very low response rate (seven or fewer respondents answered) for these four closed-ended questions:

- Question 20: Do you agree with the guidance set out in Table 1?

- Question 22: Do you agree with the guidance set out in Table 2?

- Question 24: Do you agree with the guidance set out for ground-based masts?

- Question 26: Do you agree with the guidance set out for equipment cabinets?

The results therefore showed no clear support for, nor opposition to, the guidance on these points set out in Section 2 of the LPG. Any associated comments and concerns raised for these questions have been captured in their interrelated question responses,[6] as discussed below.

Question 18: Do you agree that the guidance set out for provision of digital infrastructure in the public realm will help provide increased opportunities to improved mobile connectivity?

Most respondents agreed with the guidance set out for DCI provision in the public realm (as set out in Section 2.5 of the LPG).

Key matters raised on DCI in the public realm – comments merged for open-ended questions 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27:

- There was a comment suggesting that DCI provision in the public realm is often difficult for developers and/or providers due to **inconsistencies across London regarding the deployment** of mobile DCI. For example, small-cell deployment on lampposts or CCTV columns can be delayed or impacted due to lighting column manager restrictions, in LPAs where they may have de-cluttering initiatives in place. DCI delivery is **more effective when local authorities work together** in a joined-up manner.

- There was a suggestion that **Wi-Fi and its equivalent be freely available** in all shopping centres and/or public spaces.

- There was a suggestion that, where possible, LPAs and developers should **move away from using telephone poles**, and towards burying cable within ducts.

GLA responses:

- Section 3 encourages LPAs to think more holistically about how they can improve their practices for supporting DCI delivery by taking more of a joint approach; but appropriately addressing any local challenges remains the boroughs' responsibility.

- The importance of improving connectivity in public spaces and shopping centres is already encouraged in Section 3.3; and is increasingly provided by many boroughs.

- The suggested wording – 'where possible to move away from using telephone poles, and towards burying cable within ducts' – has been added in Section 2.3.

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[6] See key matters raised for questions 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27.

Question 30: Is there any guidance suggested in Section 2 likely to have any unintended consequences?

There was no strong agreement nor disagreement expressed on the likely unintended consequences of Section 2 of the LPG.

Key matters raised on likely unintended consequences and other comments on Section 2 of the LPG – comments merged for open-ended questions 28, 29, 31 and 32:

- A comment acknowledged there was **complexity in addressing planning and non-planning issues** (such as meeting health and safety, building standards, and legal requirements for all parties), that will need to be adhered to when siting a mast and other equipment.

- A comment highlighted the need for **better management of notices to quit** (NTQs). This poses challenges when submitting a new development application can give rise to an existing DCI installation being subjected to an NTQ. This can often result in a loss of coverage or capacity for existing users, unless a replacement site can be found quickly.

- There was a suggestion that there should be a requirement in the LPG for all **buildings over a certain height**, e.g., 18m, to include suitable space for mobile DCI infrastructure. This should be regardless of application type and whether the proposed development was major or non-major.

- There was a suggestion that older, obsolete mobile-mast and other infrastructure should be removed expediently. Additionally, it was suggested that the GLA should consider **recycling and reusing defunct telecommunications equipment** and cabling, such as copper cabling, telephone handsets and others.

GLA responses:

- The LPG guidance will be a material planning consideration in all planning decision-making. It will therefore provide the necessary leverage to ensure DCI is adequately provided in all relevant planning applications.

- The need to address any cumulative impact of NTQs has been added in Section 3.3. However, it will remain each LPA's responsibility to carefully address them, taking account of local circumstances and where it may be contributing to gaps in connectivity.

- The LPG seeks to ensure that all relevant planning applications provide adequate DCI and optimise rooftops and public realm where possible. The suggestion to mandate that all buildings over a certain height (18m or over) to provide suitable space for mobile DCI infrastructure is considered a new policy suggestion. However, it is not within the scope of the LPG to create new policy.

- Information around the removal of obsolete and unused DCI equipment has been added into Section 3.3.6. However, it will remain each LPA's responsibility to carefully address the recycling and reusing of defunct telecommunications equipment working with the DCI equipment owners.

Responses for Section 3 – Local plan-making and wider council approaches

This section summarises all the feedback on questions 33 to 41 relating to local plan-making and wider council approaches.

Question 33: Do you agree with the guidance set out for how Local Plan-making processes could support digital infrastructure delivery?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	80%
No	2	20%
Don't know	0	0%
Total	**10**	**100%**

Most respondents agreed with the guidance for how Local Plan-making processes could better support digital infrastructure delivery.

Key matters raised on the guidance set out for how Local Plan-making processes could support digital infrastructure delivery in question 34:

- There was a suggestion for a comprehensive DCI strategy that could be linked to a local authority's **Infrastructure Development Plan**, which could help in identifying individual borough capacity.

- There was a suggestion LPAs should **engage with telecommunications** operators directly. This would enable infrastructure providers to understand the anticipated scale of housing and population growth; and the potential demand from future proposed developments as part of the planning policy process.

GLA responses:

- Sections 3.1 and 3.2 already state the importance of LPAs taking the initiative, and joining up with wider council policies and any relevant strategies when developing local planning policies. Nonetheless, taking account of such strategies has been signposted in Section 3.

- Sections 3.1 and 3.2 encourage boroughs to act more strategically by engaging telecommunications operators to understand the local DCI needs for their areas when developing a Local Plan, and not through individual planning applications.

The LPG encourages LPAs and developers to cooperate and share such information where possible.

Question 35: Do you agree with the guidance set out for how the site allocation process can support digital infrastructure locally?

Question 37: Do you agree with the guidance set out for how wider council level initiatives could join-up to support DCI provision locally?

In relation to these two questions, most respondents agreed with the guidance on how the site allocation process, and wider council-level initiatives, can support digital infrastructure locally.

Key matters raised on the guidance set out for how the site allocation process can support digital infrastructure locally for question 36:

- There was a suggestion that a **standard approach/methodology** is put forward, that could help identify suitable sites and better use the assets that are already in-situ.

- There was a suggestion that the approach to the call for sites is not realistic because the **timescales** would not be practicable for the industry to meet.

- There was a suggestion that use of any given site should be **prioritised for residential development** over a site allocated for free-standing DCI; and that any provision of DCI within a site allocation should not prejudice the delivery of homes.

GLA responses:

- A 'call for sites' for the land-use site allocations is a tried-and-tested approach used by LPAs. The LPG is encouraging the use of this existing method to identify DCI sites where the LPA identifies a need and/or wants to optimise an existing site.

- The use of the call for sites would not necessarily jeopardise or undermine housing delivery, as DCI provision would need to be part of most housing or non-housing development proposals. An undertaking of a call for sites could serve more than one purpose for the LPA.

Key matters raised on how wider council level initiatives could join up support – comments merged for open-ended questions 38, 39, 40 and 41:

- There was a suggestion that one challenge to the delivery of DCI at local level has been the very **low rate of approvals for prior-approval** applications for street works.

- There was a suggestion that **boroughs could commission surveys** to understand broadband not-spots; enable better data collection; and factor in demographic changes in the area, to tailor the engagement.

- It was suggested that the LPG could require boroughs to appoint **Digital Champions**.

- There was a suggestion the guidance should seek to guide councils to **join up DCI** in the same way **as other essential services**, such as gas, electricity, lighting, etc.; and that this is treated with the same importance as the wording used in para 9.6.1 of the London Plan.

GLA responses:

- The guidance in Section 2 may help better support greater approval levels for all types of DCI proposals, including prior approvals; as street works are a highway issue, it is outside of the scope of the LPG. LPAs are responsible for managing street work masts and other DCI siting in highways.

- The LPG places responsibility on boroughs to act strategically in addressing any gaps in understanding their local area's digital needs. They would be responsible for commissioning borough surveys to better understand broadband not-spots and other local needs; this has been suggested in Section 3 more generally.

- It is not considered to be within the LPG's scope to make such requirements of LPAs. However, as best practice, boroughs can (if they choose) have a designated point of contact in the LPA for DCI matters.

- Where possible, councils should join up DCI with other essential utility services delivery. Highlighting their importance to LPAs is a central goal of the LPG.

General questions

Question 42: Do you agree that the content covered by this LPG will help improve digital connectivity infrastructure delivery?

Most respondents agreed that the content covered by this LPG will help improve DCI delivery.

The key matters raised – comments merged for open-ended questions 43 and 44:

- There was concern raised that the LPG repeats London Plan policies, and is therefore not needed.

- There was also concern that the LPG may create additional burden in an already-heavy policy landscape, alongside the requirements of the London Plan and related supplementary guidance.

GLA response:

The LPG is intended to aid decision-making and help deliver London Plan policy SI 6 more effectively and consistently across boroughs. Furthermore, whilst there are some overlaps with themes covered in the existing policy landscape, it does so to the extent that it supplements and/or signposts, rather than duplicating their content.

5   Other themes raised during the consultation

There were various comments submitted that sit outside of the scope of the DCI LPG and London Plan policy SI 6. It was not therefore possible to include these in the revised LPG proposed for adoption. These include comments related to joint working between the GLA and key stakeholders; additional technical detail relating to demonstrating suggested standards; and further suggestions for LPA actions. These will be discussed as appropriate within the GLA and through ongoing liaison with stakeholders (e.g., via the Association of London Borough Planning Officers) to see if there are further revisions to current practice that may be warranted. Some suggestions will also be relevant to the wider review of the London Plan.

6   Equality impacts

The following general equalities impacts issues raised – comments merged for open-ended questions 45-47:

- It was asked whether the LPG will be available in different languages.

- There was a supportive comment suggesting that the LPG is likely to help people with protected characteristics. There was a comment highlighting the importance of service operators to engage with older and/or lower-income households and social tenants, in a timely and targeted way, to ensure they can have appropriate connectivity.

GLA responses:

- The GLA has policies in place to help provide documents in an accessible format, and if a particular language is requested.

- As noted in the EqIA, the LPG is intended to benefit all Londoners, and not exclusively those with protected characteristics.

- There are currently well-established statutory planning duties require all residents within an affected development to be consulted when there is a planning application. Section 3 emphasises the role of LPAs to work with the wider council services and industry operators to address any gaps in connectivity and to meet local needs, which would help them identify whether more targeted action for specific digitally excluded households is needed.

The key matters raised by London Gypsies and Travellers Group:

- There was a comment highlighting the importance of mobile data because a high proportion of families and individuals live in temporary accommodation. It is therefore important to ensure that all types of accommodation (including temporary) have appropriate DCI provided, with affordable connectivity.

- There was a suggestion that London Plan Policy H14: Gypsy & Traveller accommodation requires LPAs to consider DCI provision and any issues as part of the audit requirements; and then to address them in line with clause D and E of the policy.

- There was a suggestion that the GLA Affordable Homes Programme provides funding to local authorities to refurbish existing Traveller sites, and to build new ones; and to use this opportunity to encourage providers to consider the needs for improved digital infrastructure on Traveller sites.

GLA responses to London Gypsy and Travellers Group comments:

- The guidance has been amended in Section 3.4 to capture the point that all Gypsy and Traveller sites, and any temporary accommodation, should be provided with adequate and affordable DCI where possible.

- In the opening section of the LPG, wording has been added to state that the LPG will apply when implementing the audit requirements set out in London Plan Policy H14 D and E for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in LPA-owned sites. Additionally, in Section 3.4, further cross-referencing has been made to Policy H14, clause D and E – this sets out a specific requirement that LPAs in LPA-owned sites undertake audits that could now include whether adequate DCI is being provided.

- It is not within the scope of the LPG to influence the GLA Affordable Homes Programme. However, any housing development requiring planning permission will need to take account of London Plan policy SI 6 and the DCI LPG, once adopted.

The EqIA has been reviewed and updated further to reflect post-consultation comments as above.

7   Next steps and monitoring

All views that were shared during the formal and informal engagements have been considered in the development of the final draft DCI guidance, and the key points are detailed in this report.

There has been some post-consultation follow-up engagement, which has included some operators, LPAs and the GLA's own planning and design officers. This has

supported the refinement of the document to best support policy objectives and appropriately address concerns. Where concerns and ideas raised could not be addressed in the draft LPG, these will be considered as part of the wider London Plan review, and ongoing work by the GLA and bodies it works with on digital inclusion. Consideration was given to whether further consultation on a revised draft would add value to the guidance. However, given that there has been ongoing extensive engagement with the key interested parties following the informal early engagement and post-formal consultation, it was felt that this would not add value, having regard to the use of resources and stakeholder time.

Monitoring of the policy will be set up in line with the wider London Plan monitoring framework, and the review of planning applications and decisions related to this type of development. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders is another important aspect of monitoring. Together these can inform review of the policy and supporting guidance over time. This will be particularly important to help monitor equalities impacts, and ensure objectives are being met.

Appendix 1   Consultation respondents

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets

- Port of London Authority

- London Borough of Redbridge

- Be First Ltd (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham)

- Individual (anonymous) x 2

- Mobile UK

- Boldyn Networks

- Wandsworth Borough Council

- Southwark Council

- London Gypsies & Travellers

- Business London

- Thames Estuary Growth Board

Appendix 2 Other engagement

Key consultation events:

Date	Type of event	Where	Participants/attendees
19 November 2023	West London Alliance 5G Steering Group	online	14
7 November 2023	Webinar	online	12
27 November 2023	Webinar	online	6
13 December 2023	Community and voluntary sector drop-in event	Drop-in/ phone call	4

Other promotional and engagement activities:

When	Who	Awareness-raising and promotional activities
23 and 28 November 2023	London Digital Inclusion Network	Awareness-raising via monthly newsletter
November/ December 2023	Basecamp	Raise awareness of consultation via digital inclusion community on Basecamp
23 November 2023	Good Things Foundation	Awareness-raising via newsletter targets: members of the National Digital Inclusion Network
November/ December 2023	Superhighways	Awareness-raising via online community
14 December 2023	HEAR	Awareness-raising via gatekeeper
11 December 2023	London Gypsy and Traveller Community groups	Awareness-raising via emails, London Gypsies & Travellers, Public Affairs, Friends, Families and Travellers, travellermovement.org.uk, southwarktravellersaction.org.uk, Roma Organisation for Training and Advocacy

When	Who	Awareness-raising and promotional activities
6 December 2023	Just Space Network	Awareness-raising via London-wide network of voluntary and community groups, working together to influence planning policy at the regional, borough and neighbourhood levels
1 May 2024	ALBPO (Association of London Borough Planning Officers) meeting	Awareness-raising via presentation – London LPAs targeted (September 2023 and November 2023 meetings for promotion)
8 December 2023	Inclusive design network	Borough and community-sector organisations
December 2023	Mayor of London Communities	December 2023 Mayor of London Communities Newsletter
November/ December 2023	GLA networks to external groups targeted via emails	Awareness-raising via gatekeepers such as Disability Network; Wellbeing Network; MOPAC; BAME Workshop; GLA Women's Network; Carers and Parents Network; Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme; TfL – Independent Disability Advisory Group (email); Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advisory group; Mayor's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm; London Equality Network (pan-London local authority equality officers/leads); Connected London Team digital industry stakeholder groups; community and voluntary services networks

Appendix 3   Survey questions

Below are the questions asked in the LPG survey. There were 47 questions, of which 18 were closed-ended tick-box style and 29 were open-ended comment style.

Section 0 – Page 1

Questions: Type of development the LPG is applicable to

1. Is there any other type of development that has not been listed here (in page 1) to which this guidance is applicable?

2. If you answered yes to question 1, please explain what you think should be revised or added.

3. Building Regulations (part R) have now covered fully the requirements set out in London Plan policy SI 6 A(1) and therefore its requirements are not covered again in this guidance. Do you agree with this position?

4. If you have answered no to question 3, please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

5. Do you agree this guidance should also apply to digital infrastructure development prior approval notifications?

6. If you have answered no to question 5, please explain and give your reasoning

7. Do you have any other comments on this preliminary section (page 1)? please be as specific as possible and give your reasoning

Section 1 – Supporting information required with planning application submissions (pages 4-5)

8. Do you agree with the suggested supporting information for planning applications?

9. If you have answered no to question 8, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

10. Are there likely to be any unintended consequences of any aspects of the guidance set out in Section 1?

11. If you have answered yes to question 10, please explain

12. Do you have any other comments on Section 1, please be as specific as possible and give any additional suggestions?

Section 2 – Better Design for DCI Delivery

13. Do you agree that building level mobile connectivity should be available throughout the development to meet the expected demand of all its end users?

14. If you have answered no to question 13, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

15. Do you have any additional suggestions for how to avoid reducing mobile connectivity for neighbouring buildings because of an improvement in connectivity in one building? Please explain and give any additional suggestions?

16. Do you agree that the guidance set out for digital infrastructure on rooftop sites will support opportunities to improve mobile connectivity of an identified area?

17. If you have answered no to question 16, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

18. Do you agree that the guidance set out for provision of digital infrastructure in the public realm will help provide increased opportunities to improved mobile connectivity?

19. If you have answered no to question 18, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

20. Do you agree with the guidance set out in Table 1?

21. If you have answered no to question 20, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

22. Do you agree with the guidance set out in Table 2?

23. If you have answered no to question 22, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

24. Do you agree with the guidance set out for ground-based masts?

25. If you have answered no to question 24, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

26. Do you agree with the guidance set out for equipment cabinets?

27. If you have answered no to question 26, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

28. Are there any other types of digital infrastructure not identified that needs to be discussed in this section?

29. If you have answered yes to question 28, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

30. Is there any guidance suggested in Section 2 likely to have any unintended consequences?

31. If you have answered yes to question 30, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

32. Do you have any other comments on Section 2 (please be as specific as possible and suggest alternative wording where appropriate)?

Section 3: Local-Plan making processes and wider council initiatives

33. Do you agree with the guidance set out for how Local-Plan making processes could support digital infrastructure delivery?

34. If you have answered no to question 33, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

35. Do you agree with the guidance set out for how the site allocation process can support digital infrastructure locally?

36. If you have answered no to question 35, please explain and give any additional suggestions?

37. Do you agree with the guidance set out for how wider council level initiatives could join-up to support DCI provision locally?

38. If you have answered no to question 37, please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

39. Is there anything else Local Planning Authorities can do to better to understand and address any gaps in digital infrastructure coverage and capacity to meet user needs in their locality?

40. If you have answered yes to question 39, please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

41. Are there any other comments you wish to make on Section 3 on how Local Planning Authorities can better support DCI provision in their locality – please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

General questions

42. Do you agree that the content covered by this LPG will help improve digital connectivity infrastructure delivery?

43. If you have answered no to question 41, please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

44. Are there any other comments you wish to make on this LPG – please explain and provide any additional suggestions?

EqIA questions

45. Are you aware of any additional evidence that the GLA should use to understand any potential impacts resulting from the guidance on protected groups?

46. Are you aware of any additional impacts resulting from the draft guidance that could affect those with protected characteristics?

47. Do you have any further comments on the EqIA that accompanies the draft guidance?
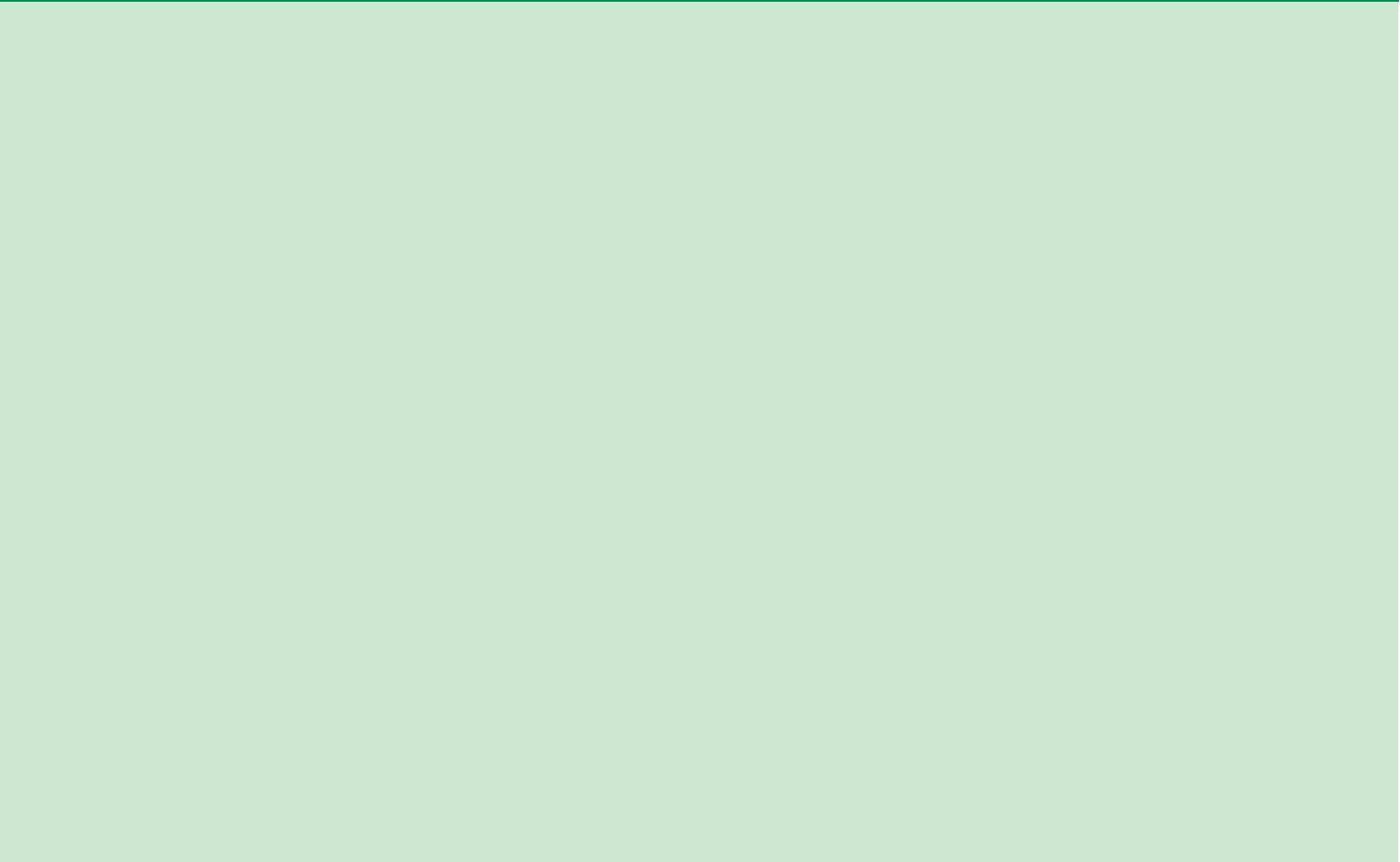
Purpose-built Student Accommodation London Plan Guidance

Consultation summary report

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Table of contents

1. Introduction

Between 19 October 2023 and 11 January 2024, the Greater London Authority (GLA) carried out a [formal consultation](#) on the Mayor's draft Purpose-built Student Accommodation (PBSA) London Plan Guidance (LPG). This followed a period of early engagement which informed the scope and initial drafting.

Two online events were held through the consultation period for Londoners to learn more about the draft LPG and ask questions. Officers also took part in a seminar organised by Business LDN, and held meetings with Local Planning Authority (LPA) representatives and the Mayor's Academic Forum at which the draft LPG was discussed.

This report provides a summary of the consultation responses received during the consultation period via an online survey; and from submitted emails and stakeholder event comments and questions. It identifies the key issues that were raised on the draft LPG, noting the type of stakeholder raising the issue (where this was distinctive). It then sets out the GLA's response to these issues. This response has been informed by follow-up conversations with particular stakeholder groups, including the Mayor's Academic Forum and LPAs, as well as GLA development management colleagues.

The Mayor would like to thank everyone who took part for engaging with the guidance. Appendix 1 includes a breakdown of all the engagement events that were held; Appendix 2 lists consultation respondents (where this is non-personal data); and Appendix 3 reproduces the survey used in the online consultation.

1.1 Who took part?

During the consultation period over 100 people attended the events and meetings at which the LPG was discussed. The consultation page was viewed over 2,000 times, and nearly 500 people downloaded a consultation document. There were 39 consultation responses.

Information about the organisations that non-individual respondents represent has been inferred (given limited self-declaration) from survey responses and other response material, and is summarised below. There is limited data available about event attendees, other than those that came by invitation, as noted in Appendix 1. There is no detailed data available about virtual event attendees and page views. Therefore, the information on who took part likely represents only a small sample of those engaged, and does not reflect the true breadth of engagement.

Survey respondents were asked for equality monitoring information to assess how representative respondents were compared to the demographics of Londoners. However, only a limited number of responses were received, so an accurate analysis could not be made. This data has not been included in this consultation summary report.

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Business excluding providers and developers	3	8%
PBSA providers/investors and their agents	12	31%
Other developers	2	5%
Higher education provider (HEP)	5	13%
Campaign/interest group	2	5%
LPA	12	31%
Statutory consultee/professional body	2	5%
Individual	1	3%
Total	**39**	**Rounded numbers so sums to just over 100**

2. Consultation feedback and GLA response

2.1 Summary of key issues raised

As part of the consultation on the draft guidance, respondents were asked to submit answers to a survey combining specific and more open questions through the GLA's online consultation portal. Some chose to submit emailed letter responses instead; not all of these used the survey questions as headings. This section is organised by issue, mirroring the structure of the draft LPG. Where relevant, the support for a position is indicated where this was discernible through a specific question. The summaries also incorporate relevant feedback received through the other consultation period events and subsequent engagement where they relate to the issue under discussion. Points relating to the heart of the policy are noted for future policy review; it is not the place of LPG to revisit these.

Issue 1: the role of PBSA and spatial issues of over-concentration

The draft LPG sought to clarify the narrative about the contribution of PBSA to different London Plan objectives, and thus provide clear reasons to support it in principle. It also recognised concerns about the dominance of PBSA, both spatially and in delivery pipeline terms, by providing guidance about how to assess this and possible policy responses for Local Plans.

The key matters raised:

- Providers and development interests mostly supported the role of PBSA set out in Box 1. It was also noted that PBSA could have a particular role in releasing family-sized accommodation from House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) use .

- However, there was also concern that some of the more negative potential impacts identified elsewhere in the document (notably sections 2.3 and 2.4) were overstated and more linked (if anything) to unmanaged HMO accommodation. It was also proposed that some of the policy suggestions and evidence referenced in Box 2 needed greater nuancing to avoid over-simplified approaches – contrary to the positive spirit of Policy H15, which recognises the importance of PBSA.

LPA responses were typically more sceptical about the positive roles set out in Box 1 coming to fruition. This was especially in light of recent development trends which have seen PBSA out-stripping C3 residential, and amidst acute mainstream affordable housing need.

- Various suggestions and requests for more evidence to be included in the introduction or Box 1. This includes information about the current position regarding PBSA bedspaces relative to student numbers, updating the London Plan figure, and on the spatial distribution of PBSA.

GLA response

Some amendments have been made to the draft document aiming to strike a balanced tone throughout, including to acknowledge the HMO points and the concerns about over-simplified approaches to managing distribution. Points regarding over-concentration, including as a proportion of delivery, were already in the draft guidance, but it is clarified that this is not just an inner London issue and positive planning for PBSA is encouraged. Any Local Plan policies would be subject to due process including independent examination, which provides further appropriate checks and balances. LPG is not the place to set out evidence which would rapidly date it; but improved availability of evidence at the pan-London level will be investigated as part of the London Plan review process.

Issue 2: Affordable Student Accommodation (ASA) and the balance (where relevant) with C3 affordable housing

The draft guidance sought to clarify expectations in situations of larger schemes that incorporate both C3 housing and PBSA, but cannot necessarily provide policy-compliant levels of both ASA and C3 affordable housing. It acknowledged that in some cases C3 and PBSA were both desirable; but in considering the balance between C3 affordable housing and PBSA in the context of viability constraints, ASA should be prioritised for various reasons.

The key matters raised:

Of those that answered a question on the balance, 58 per cent thought the draft LPG wording didn't strike the right balance between affordable C3 and ASA; 33 per cent thought it did; and the rest weren't sure. However, the reasons varied.

Many providers and development interests were concerned that any reference to C3 being taken to be desirable would be interpreted as a requirement, and a preference over ASA. It was suggested it would be detrimental to delivery of ASA, social inclusion, and overall viability; and would discourage specialist developers. It was also pointed out that without ASA of a sufficient amount (unspecified) they are unlikely to be able to secure nominations agreements, and hence compliance with another part of the policy. Issues of physical deliverability were also raised, given the requirement for separation of different products, with at least an impact on site efficiency.

Some responses (typically LPAs) suggested the balance should be a matter of LPA discretion based on local needs or that the suggested approach was not consistent with wider affordable housing priorities. There is also concern from some that ASA is not meeting local need. However, in discussion, there was also concern about increasing tendency for predominant provision to be studios rather than cluster flats, which was seen to be undermining wider moves to affordability.

There was also a desire from some providers and other development interests for a stronger position on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) relief, to encourage it rather than just noting it doesn't apply to ASA. Some also noted an issue with ASA losing value over time, given that maintenance loan rates had not increased in line with inflation. This can be a problem for asset valuation.

However, it was also noted, particularly by LPAs and others involved in development management, that most PBSA goes through the fast-track route (FTR), suggesting ASA viability is not an issue. Some recent Local Plan viability testing was also cited to this end. It was also noted that some mixed-use schemes have been able to achieve both C3 affordable and ASA at FTR-eligible levels.

GLA response

The balance of the guidance has been reviewed, and we have sought to clarify the considerations that should be covered and weighed in an officer's assessment, but not to suggest their prioritisation. These include the link with securing a nominations agreement and in alleviating family housing. This is appropriately flexible and in line with overall good growth objectives. These seek for London to build on its 'tradition of openness, equality and diversity' – which implies provision for affordable housing for newcomers (including students) as well as the existing population. This can be described as a strategic need. It is also clarified that some of each is sought in mixed-provision schemes – that it will rarely be appropriate for ASA to be entirely substituted with C3 affordable housing. This recognises, in particular, that this is the only route through which ASA can be secured.

The policy's interest in wider affordability was already highlighted in the consultation draft LPG. This has been supplemented with some additional text regarding its relevance to, and for, wider mixed and inclusive community objectives in terms of the balance between studio and cluster flat provision.

It is considered that wider CIL points are best approached through plan review and wider viability testing. Therefore, it is considered that the text that was copied over from the extant Housing SPG (which encourages this) is the most appropriate at this point.

Issue 3: accessible room provision

The draft guidance incorporated Practice Guidance that had not been consulted on; this sought levels of accessible room provision at 10-15 per cent, in line with recommended standards for serviced visitor/motel accommodation. Justification was based on: historic under-provision likely to have suppressed disabled students' take-up, and hence equality of opportunity; the use of the accommodation as visitor accommodation in summer, where need is higher; and PBSA, by definition, being more able to design-in accessibility than older private rented stock.

The key matters raised:

- Of those that answered a question about the appropriateness of the provision sought, an equal proportion supported and didn't support it; 23 per cent either weren't sure or didn't respond. Typically, LPAs supported and providers didn't.
- Providers point out that rates of disability are lower in the typical undergraduate age demographic; given the long lead-in times between sign-up and occupation, there is ample scope to ensure rooms are adapted to a student's personal needs (and they have demonstrably done this whenever asked). They note that take-up rates are very low (0.002 per cent in one provider across the country, 0.05 per cent for another); and that such rooms are less attractive to non-disabled students. This can have wider opportunity costs, given the impact on total room numbers and other costs. Most suggest 5 per cent as more appropriate with 5 per cent adaptable – or in one case, 1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.
- LPAs were generally supportive of the principle of the position of aiming high to address historic under-provision and improve equality of opportunity. Clarification was also sought on the level of disabled parking provision to be sought, given the parking policy requirement for PBSA to be car free.
There were various suggestions about further guidance and clarifications that could be made to improve detail, and consideration of other disabilities beyond those requiring wheelchair use.

GLA response

To provide suitable housing and genuine choice for London's diverse population, including disabled people, the GLA is consistently applying the policy of at least 10 per cent of new dwellings in housing development. However, the point about

underlying need in the youth demographic is considered relevant,[1] given the specialist nature of this housing, with older students being less likely to live outside of their established residence. It is noted that the British Standards good practice document advises a position of 5 per cent of provision to be wheelchair accessible (including 1 per cent with a tracked hoist) and 5 per cent adaptable. Many authorities are already adhering to this.

Recognising also that there will be wider tradeoffs with other needs (e.g. overall room numbers, ASA provision) it is considered to be more appropriate to seek this level of provision. This remains ambitious to offset under-provision in the private rental sector, and provide certainty of provision and choice for disabled students; but is more aligned with need and market realities. In addition, the justification for seeking this amount has been strengthened, with the addition of a marketing expectation to improve awareness expected to enhance its impact e.g.. The Practice Note will be withdrawn on adoption of the final LPG.

Some additional amendments have been made to the draft LPG to strengthen its advice on inclusive design, relevant to particular disabilities and impairments. These include signposting more detailed guidance and clarifying the point on disabled user parking provision.

Issue 4: design quality, functionality and inclusivity – including the absence of standards and case studies

The draft guidance provided general qualitative guidance on design quality, functionality and inclusivity, without any quantitative standards or benchmarks, indicative layouts or good practice case studies. Pre-consultation engagement suggested that this would be appropriate as standards had improved in a market-led way, and it was a fast moving/innovative sector where guidance could rapidly date.

The key matters raised:

- Two-thirds of those that responded on this issue agreed with our approach of not providing case studies and sample layouts; just over a fifth disagreed.
- LPAs, in particular, tended to seek more detailed guidance. This includes suggestions of a cross-reference to the co-living LPG quality benchmarks, or development of bespoke PBSA benchmarks, for such things as per capita levels of communal amenity space. There is concern that in the absence of these or other good-practice examples, it is hard to push up design ambition and prevent redesigns that downgrade design quality, e.g. through eroding amenity space. This is intertwined with health impact concerns following COVID-19, and with thinking about appropriate tall building design.
- Most providers (and some LPAs) agreed with the position taken in the draft guidance – though some providers pushed for nuancing of even the qualitative detail. For example, they point to case law establishing that C3 standards are

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[1] Further detail is provided in the EqIA for the post-consultation draft guidance.

not applicable to PBSA, so reference to these even as a benchmark to aim towards was not supported. It was also noted that the distribution of amenity space was often a matter the nominating HEPs wanted to be able to influence, rather than being something that could be prescribed in a particular format. They also noted that design and distribution of amenities evolved over time in response to user feedback.

- There was some suggestion of additional detail that could be added in relation to fire safety, and the quality and usability of communal internal and external amenity spaces.

GLA response

The appropriateness of the qualitative emphasis of the guidance has been reviewed in light of the additional views put forward. However, it is considered that there are other means (e.g. meetings of the Association of London Borough Planning Officers), through which good practice can be shared as it emerges. Co-living, or large-scale purpose-built shared living, is a distinctive product and while it shares some similarities with PBSA, it is not always appropriate to directly read across to it. Nor is it helpful to require the reader to refer to yet another document to complete the guidance. It would require a lot of work, without evidence that design quality is consistently poor to provide more detailed quantitative benchmarks. This would delay the introduction of the guidance, which is agreed to be much needed. It has been concluded that quantitative benchmarks, case studies and other detail would not be added.

Some of the qualitative design guidance has been revised to add further detail that should help secure quality and functionality (e.g. guidance on the connections between internal and external communal amenity space, and on securing appropriate amounts of communal amenity space into the future). It has also been moderated to reflect deliverability concerns over prescriptiveness, noting the points around case law and nominating HEPs' different preferences.

Fire safety detail will be picked up in a forthcoming dedicated LPG. This will provide a consolidated source for all relevant material that needs to be considered and presented in the round, rather than in a piecemeal way through use-specific guidance.

Issue 5: Nominations Agreements – logic and expectations of what and when

The draft guidance reinforced the importance of nominations agreements covering the majority of bedspaces, by providing a detailed explanation of their expected role in moderating supply. It suggested that they should be sought in perpetuity, or at least with continual coverage. A letter of comfort, and a statement of need, at application stage were suggested to be important for the decision maker, given that the nominations agreement doesn't have to be in place until the point of first occupation.

The key matters raised:

There was concern from several industry perspectives that linking appetite for nominations and need is misguided. It was pointed out that universities can be conservative in their acceptance of new accommodation locations. If those locations are nonetheless attractive to students, they will live there in other types of housing. Equally, given that nominations agreements can involve balance sheet liability for HEPs, a low appetite for financial risk may outweigh actual need, which it is at an all-time high.

Some suggested that a needs assessment could be an alternative to nominations agreements; or that 'soft' nominations (e.g. referral only, or with scope for release past a certain date) could be clearly identified as acceptable.

It was also suggested that letters of comfort and needs statements are too onerous – at least at application stage, and especially for outline applications. They also don't reflect the fact that plots may change hands subsequently. A deferral of this recommended provision, so that it occurs before full decision stage, or removal of it entirely (allowing the legal obligation of the S106 to work as intended) were suggested.

Several providers and HEPs also noted that nominations agreements would never be agreed in perpetuity, so these will always have to be renewed at some point. This gets harder to achieve as stock gets older.

A few LPAs were concerned that ASA allocation lacks transparency or a link to local need, and suggested it shouldn't be restricted to first-years students.

GLA response

The points about the complexities of the link between need and appetite for nominations agreements have been reflected in a more nuanced explanation in the revised guidance. This is appropriate given that the guidance already acknowledges that it may not always be possible to secure nominations agreements by the point of first occupation, or continuously. Likewise, reference to nominations agreements being secured in perpetuity has been removed; and the suggested provision of a letter of comfort and needs statement has been modified to be more realistic as suggested.

In addition, in the interests of transparency, a reference to the expectation that a nominations agreement for ASA comes with an appropriate audit trail has been added. The revised guidance also clarifies that all students, in principle, should be eligible for ASA; and cites the recommendation that domestic student eligibility is tied to eligibility for the maximum maintenance loan, given that this is independently assessed and linked to the definition of ASA. However, it is also recognised that such assessments do not always fully capture need, and other approaches may also be appropriate.

It is not within the scope of the guidance to remove the requirement for a nominations agreement entirely. Individual needs assessments are also noted to lack strategic perspective and consistency of method so would be an unhelpful alternative. The policy is clear that the strategic need for PBSA is established,. However, it is clarified that 'referral only' type nominations are acceptable and in line with what was originally envisaged by the policy.[2] It is also noted that the draft guidance already softened the risk for HEPs, by suggesting that they also have recourse to a fallback cascade if they have insufficient students to nominate themselves.

Issue 6: Nominations Agreements – reasonable endeavours, cascade mechanisms and proxies

The draft guidance recognised the need for some flexibility around nominations agreements. It suggested accepting 'all reasonable endeavours' (rather than having an absolute requirement) to secure one on an ongoing basis, and a fallback direct-let cascade.

The key matters raised:

Increased flexibility around nominations agreements was welcomed by most respondents (apart from some a couple of LPAs who saw nominations agreements to be an essential moderating device). Many suggested the nominations-agreement element of policy is not fit for purpose, and observed that the HEP appetite for nominations agreement is drying up, except for ASA.

However, it was also flagged by one agent that this flexibility could have an unintended consequence. It was pointed out that the 16 per cent 'market' rooms subject to a nominations agreement are typically discounted to attract an HEP. As such, if there is a fallback that allows everything except the ASA to be let at full market rent, there is no incentive to pursue a nominations agreement by offering a discount. This, in turn, may enable providers to raise overall prices, and land value may increase – affecting future ability to provide affordable housing. This could create a market distortion – favouring new PBSA over existing PBSA; and further fuelling the current relative viability (and hence delivery) of PBSA compared to C3 conventional housing. It was suggested that increasing the proportion of ASA sought in the absence of a nominations agreement could remedy this.

Some respondents asked for clarification as to whether 'all reasonable endeavours' should include offering market incentives (i.e. rental discounts) or if it was simply a matter of demonstrating that relevant HEPs had been contacted.

Clarification was also sought on the proposed ability for charitable and other bodies to take on a 'proxy' role on behalf of HEPs. While this was generally welcomed in

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[2] The policy was drawn up with and supported by the Mayor's Academic Forum, including HEPs, on the basis of establishing a greater connection with new PBSA, but not taking on development risk.

principle, more detail as to how such bodies would be defined, and their connection with assessed HEPs, was requested.

GLA response

Following further consideration concerning the legal ambiguity of the term 'all reasonable endeavours', the post-consultation version of the guidance has been revised to use the term 'reasonable endeavours'. This may be regarded as a lower bar by some, but the premise of the guidance is that there are some other acceptable routes to securing the policy intent, which is where effort is best spent. Clarification has also been added regarding what should be expected in demonstrating the use of reasonable endeavours to secure a nominations agreement – so there is consistency between LPAs, and the process is sufficiently rigorous. It is suggested that this should include positively responding to HEPs' requirements relating to, for instance, design and rental costs rather than everything being on the provider's initial terms. This helps to reflect the policy's concern with affordability and design quality.

The point regarding the scope for potential market distortion has been carefully considered, with further engagement undertaken. This has suggested that discounting on the 16 per cent is not universal and may be impacting the ability of schemes to proceed viably. On balance, the risk is felt to be best addressed by ensuring that the cascade mechanism is appropriately onerous (applying to all remaining unlet and un-nominated rooms) and an ongoing administrative burden for providers. The burden on LPAs is to be defrayed by payment of an additional monitoring fee. The suggested alternative of additional ASA on an interim basis was considered; however, it was concluded that this would go beyond the existing policy, introducing a new requirement. It would add excessive complexity, given there may not always be viability headroom to provide this, creating a need for viability testing and associated delay.

Further detail on likely suitable proxy arrangements has also been added, recognising that clarity is important to provide consistency and avoid gaming practices that subvert the policy intent or create market advantage. In the absence of a nominations agreement for ASA, it is also clarified that the fallback position would be for the provider to allocate according to need or an appropriate proxy indicator, with an appropriate audit trail. In doing so, full maintenance loan eligibility is recognised as an appropriate independent assessment, though it is understood this may not always be available at the right time. However, stakeholders have advised that not having a nominations agreement in place for the ASA would be highly unusual, given continued HEP appetite to take these on – given that it reflects their students' needs.

3. Equality impacts

Equality impact concerns were raised in relation to the following:

- Some of the language was perceived to unfairly single out students as a potential source of antisocial behaviour, which could fuel prejudicial attitudes. It was suggested that it may be more appropriate to highlight the importance of providing managed, safe and secure spaces for young people who are newly independent; and better consider youth and protected characteristics that may make some students vulnerable. Specific health infrastructure needs of students were also highlighted.

- Concern that PBSA was for a young and single demographic; the guidance does not reference the needs of students who are married or have children.

- Neurodiversity and mental health, plus prayer/worship needs: suggestion that these could be better reflected in the sections on design detail.

- Trans and non-binary students: since the LPG was consulted on, a [new report](#) has been published looking at the experience of trans and non-binary students in higher education. This flags the value of offering LGBQT+ only flats in PBSA blocks that include cluster flats, as these provide safe spaces for such students. However, it is noted that there are also disadvantages to segregation in this way.

GLA response

- As noted in section 1, the language of the document has been reviewed. Greater clarity has also been given to guidance on spaces open to the public; spaces for students and their guests; and the specific infrastructure needs of students.

- There is nothing in the guidance that would prevent PBSA being designed and managed for students who are married or have children. It is also noted that some providers allow dual occupancy of some rooms, which would be available to couples (married or unmarried). However, older students and those with families would tend to be more likely to live in conventional housing, or in dedicated PBSA that best meets their needs, typically managed by the HEP. A least one Registered Provider is also known to be operating in this space and providing access to affordable postgraduate housing.

- The guidance relating to inclusive design and management has been strengthened overall, as detailed in various sections above. This includes reference to management plans securing aspects of inclusivity such as appropriate management of flexible spaces, and awareness raising of inclusive features through advertising. It is also suggested that consideration be given to provision and sensitive allocation of LGBQT+ only cluster flats, recognising that not all LGBQT+ students will want to be accommodated in this way.

The EqIA has been updated to reflect post-consultation amendments and these matters.

1.2 Next steps and monitoring

Consideration was given as to whether a further re-consultation, on a revised draft, would add value to the guidance. However, it was felt to be more appropriate to undertake targeted discussions with LPAs, the Mayor's Academic Forum, and some consultation respondents who had made points that required further exploration. This follow-up engagement has included operators and their agents, HEPs, LPAs, and the GLA's own planning and viability officers. As explained above, it has enabled the refinement of the document to best support policy objectives and appropriately address concerns. This engagement is detailed in Appendix 1.

Monitoring of the policy continues in line with the wider London Plan monitoring framework, and review of planning applications and decisions related to this type of housing. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders, including through the Planning for London programme and regular meetings with LPAs is another important aspect of monitoring. Together, these can inform review of the policy and supporting guidance over time. This will be particularly important to help monitor equalities impacts; and ensure that mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods objectives are being met.

Appendix 1: Consultation and engagement events

Early engagement

Roundtables

- 23 March 2023 – Mayor's Academic Forum (22 attendees)
- 14 July 2023 – LPA discussion (10 attendees)

Consultation period engagement

Q&A webinars

- 26 October 2023 (around 25 attendees)
- 3 November 2023 (35 attendees)

Roundtables

- 2 November 2023: BusinessLDN breakfast roundtable (27 attendees from 23 organisations, including HEPs, PBSA providers and their agents)

- LPA discussion (12 attendees from 9 LPAs, plus GLA DM officers)

- 5 January 2024: Mayor's Academic Forum Meeting (13 attendees including LPAs, HEPs, PBSA providers and agents, NUS and business groups)

Post-consultation engagement

One-to-one discussions (following up points raised in their submissions for clarification)

- 23 May 2024: British Property Federation Student Housing sub-group chair
- 13 June 2024 Affordable Accommodation for Students Ltd
- 14 June 2024: Student First Group

Roundtables

- 1 August 2024: LPA discussion (11 attendees from 10 LPAs)
- 8 August 2024: Mayor's Academic Forum Meeting (15 organisations attended, including HEPs, LPAs, PBSA providers and agents, and business groups).

Appendix 2: Consultation respondents

- London Boroughs (LPAs):

  Barking and Dagenham; Brent; Bromley; Camden; Greenwich; Islington; Kingston upon Thames; Lambeth; Lewisham; Redbridge; Richmond upon Thames; Southwark; Tower Hamlets.

- Statutory consultee/professional body:

  NHS London HUDU, National Fire Chiefs' Council.

- PBSA providers/investors and their agents

  Affordable Accommodation for Students Ltd; Dominus; Downing; EQT Exeter; Fusion Group; IQ Student; Jigsaw Assets; Scape; Tide; Tribe; Unite; Watkin Jones.

- Other developers

  Canary Wharf Group; Earls Court Dev Co.

- Higher Education Providers:

  Imperial College London; Middlesex University; University College London; University of East London; University of London.

- Campaign/interest group:

  British Property Federation; BusinessLDN

- Other business

  Foundation for International Education; Jane Simpson Access; Student First

- Individual (1)

Appendix 3: Survey questions

Please note there are no questions on **Section 1**.

Section 2 – Mixed and Inclusive Neighbourhoods

Do you agree with the identified roles that PBSA can have in achieving different London Plan objectives as part of mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods, as set out in Box 1 of the guidance?

2. If you have answered **no** to question **1**, please explain what you think should be revised or added.

3. Does the wording at paragraph 2.5.4 of the guidance strike the appropriate balance between mainstream (C3) affordable and affordable student (ASA) housing need for the reasons given?

4. If you have answered **no** to **question 3**, please explain and suggest an alternative re-wording.

5. The guidance incorporates the GLA's Practice Note on Wheelchair Accessible and Adaptable Student Housing and gives a reasoning (at paragraph 2.5.9) for the levels sought. Do you agree with this position?

6. If you have answered **no** to **question 5**, please suggest an alternative and give your reasoning.

7. Are there likely to be any unintended consequences of any aspects of the guidance in **Section 2**?

8. If you have answered **yes** to **question 7**, please explain.

9. We have not provided any example layouts or other case studies given that designs evolve over time in response to market trends and are also linked to operator branding and innovation. Do you agree that this is the right approach?

10. If you have answered **no** to **question 9** do you have any alternative suggestions?

11. Do you have any other comments on **Section 2** (please be as specific as possible and suggest alternative wording where appropriate)?

12. Do you wish to draw our attention to any schemes or other evidence that support your points? (Please upload a document or provide a link to any relevant web-based material)

Section 3 – Aligning with need - nominations agreements

13. Do you have any views on the advice for S106 agreements to contain as a minimum, the requirement to use 'all reasonable endeavours' to secure nominations agreements?

14. If you have answered **yes** to **question 13**, please give more detail)

15. Do you have any views on the suggested cascade mechanism at paragraph 3.2.13 of the guidance?

16. If you have answered **yes** to **question 15**, please give more detail.

17. Are there likely to be any unintended consequences of any aspects of the guidance in **Section 3**?

18. If you have answered **yes** to **question 17,** please explain.

19. Do you have any other comments on **Section 3**? (please be as specific as possible and suggest alternative wording where appropriate)?

20. Do you wish to draw our attention to any S106 or nominations agreements as examples, or any other evidence that support your points? (Please upload a document or provide a link to any relevant web-based material)

General

21. Does the guidance cover an appropriate scope?

22. If you have answered **no** to **question 21**, and there or are there other aspects of Policy H15 or related policies that it would be helpful to cover, please explain or give more detail.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

23. Are you aware of any additional evidence that the Greater London Authority should use to understand any potential impacts resulting from the guidance on protected groups?

24. Are you aware of any additional impacts resulting from the draft guidance that could affect those with protected characteristics?

25. Do you have any further comments on the EqIA that accompanies the draft guidance?