

# Estate redevelopment in London: Have things improved under the current Mayor?



A briefing by Sian Berry, Green Party member of the London Assembly  
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## Mayor's manifesto commitment

*"Require that estate regeneration only takes place where there is resident support, based on full and transparent consultation, and that demolition is only permitted where it does not result in a loss of social housing, or where all other options have been exhausted."*

## Key findings

- Completed social housing redevelopment schemes involving demolition have led to the net loss of 6,748 social and council homes in London since 2003.
- Schemes currently in the pipeline – either with planning permission or with demolition and construction started but not completed - would see the net loss of 6,791 more social and council homes.
- Overall, London is set to have lost more than 13,500 council homes in estate redevelopment schemes once the currently approved projects are completed.
- The current Mayor's new planning and resident ballot policies are yet to have a significant effect on stemming the net loss of social housing in estate redevelopment schemes approved to date.

There are signs that the current Mayor's interventions into major schemes that are referred to him for planning approval have led to more social rented homes in new homes being built. However, since 2016 only around 250 extra social rent homes have been added after GLA intervention in the schemes I have examined here, with many more being demolished. Importantly, I have found a continued net loss in schemes approved since 2018.

New planning law proposals from the Government were published in August 2020.<sup>1</sup> These propose forcing local authorities to define 'growth' and 'renewal' areas, which would receive rapid or automatic planning approval for demolition schemes. Worryingly, the Government documents setting out the proposals do not give a single mention to the right of people already living in these areas to have a say over the loss of their homes.

The Government's proposals so far also give no clarity on the role of strategic regional plans, like the London Plan, in setting additional planning policies. This poses a risk to good new regional policies, such as the like-for-like replacement of social housing that is required in London's new plan. Even the small progress shown in this briefing is under grave threat from the Government's top-down proposals.

## Introduction and background

In 2018, I examined data on approved planning applications from the London Development Database (LDD) to find out the impact of estate 'regeneration' development schemes across London.<sup>2,3</sup>

I found over 4,000 council homes had been lost in completed redevelopment schemes on sites containing existing social housing since 2003, and that the pace of demolition was accelerating, with a further 7,612 social rented homes set to be lost in schemes that were already approved.

Since then, the Mayor's new London Plan has progressed. Each draft since the first set of changes were published in August 2018,<sup>4</sup> has featured strong new planning policies requiring the replacement of all social housing demolished as part of estate redevelopment schemes. Although it is not yet in force, these policies have steadily gained weight in decision-making as the London Plan has got closer to final publication.

In addition, the Mayor's new guidance for estate regeneration, Better homes for local people, published in February 2018, included an additional requirement for a ballot for residents on estates facing demolition after a strong campaign by Londoners, including myself. The ballot policy came into force in July 2018.

I wanted to look at the situation again for two reasons:

1. To examine whether these new policies are having an impact on the level of social housing demolition without replacement in planning applications.
2. To publish updated data on the impact of estate redevelopment on the total net loss of social housing in London.

Therefore, I requested a new full copy of the LDD from the GLA's Planning Unit for analysis.<sup>5</sup> I received all data available up to 13 July 2020, and I have carried out analysis on all proposals for sites containing existing social housing units that were given planning permission since 2003 (the most reliable possible start date for any reliable analysis using the current LDD). This briefing is a summary of my findings.

# Results of analysis of the LDD

## Completed schemes:

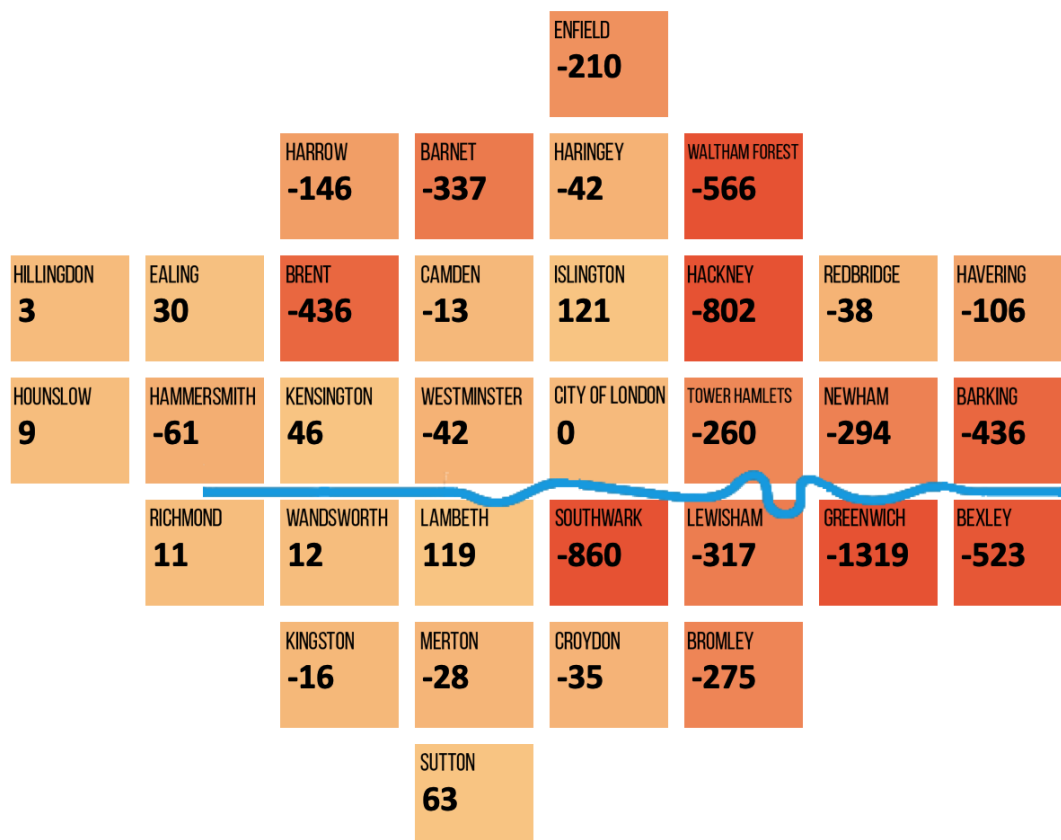
A total of **6,748** social rented homes have been lost in schemes given planning permission since 2003 that have been completed. The boroughs of Greenwich, Southwark and Hackney have the highest total net losses of social housing.

Examples of schemes within each of these boroughs contributing to these totals are:

- **Greenwich:** Ferrier Estate, Haddo Estate
- **Southwark:** Heygate Estate, Five Estates/Peckham Partnership, Elmington Estate
- **Hackney:** Haggerstone West and Kingsland Estates, Nightingale Estate, Hillside Estate

## Social housing net loss/gain - completed schemes in London

(Since 2003, data from London Development Database, July 2020, all schemes on sites with existing social housing demolition, completed schemes only)



## Pipeline of schemes:

A total of **6,791** social rented homes will be lost in schemes with planning permission granted since 2003, for which construction has not started, or has begun and not yet been completed.

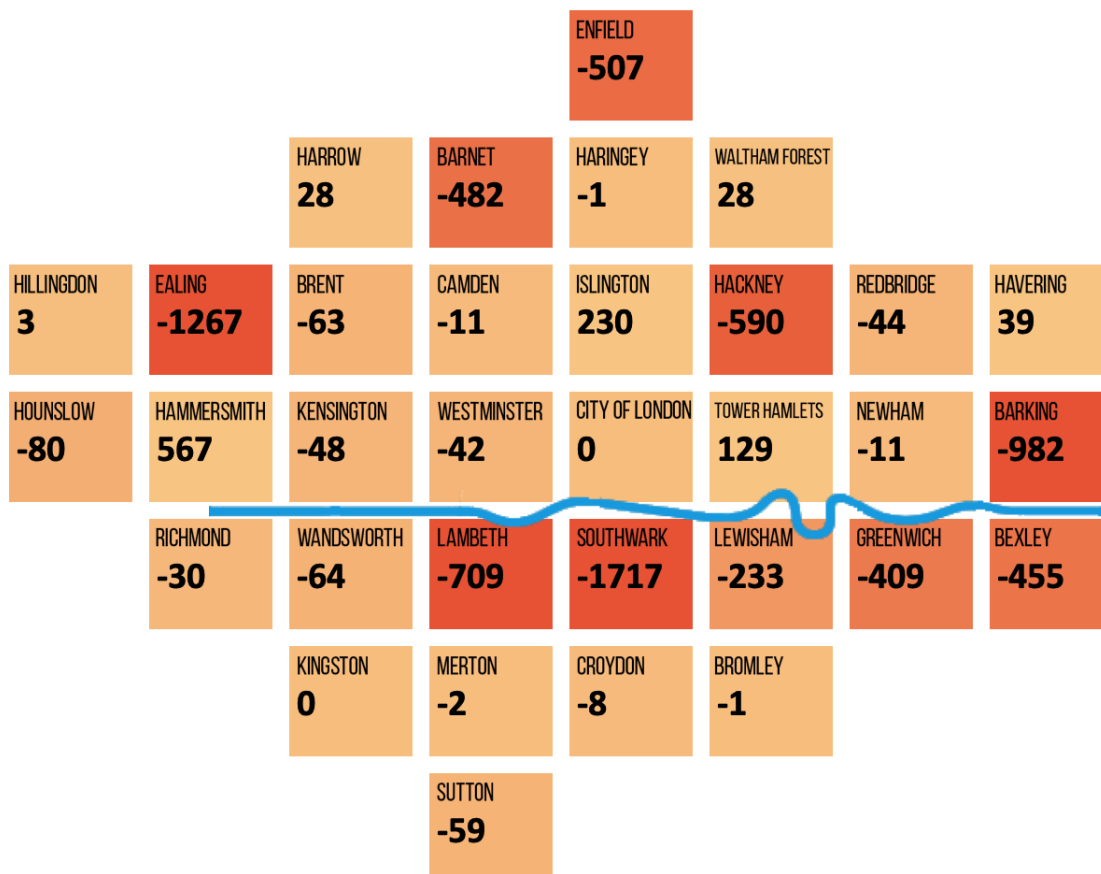
The boroughs of Southwark, Ealing and Barking & Dagenham have the highest total net losses of social housing.

Examples of schemes within each of these boroughs contributing to these totals are:

- **Southwark:** Heygate Estate, Wood Dene Estate, Aylesbury Estate (the total takes into account recent changes to phase 1 of the Aylesbury proposals that increase the number of replacement council homes by nearly 300)
- **Ealing:** South Acton Estate, Green Man Lane Estate, Havelock Estate
- **Barking & Dagenham:** Gascoigne Estate, Becontree Hill

## Social housing net loss/gain - pipeline of schemes in London

(Data from London Development Database, July 2020, all schemes on sites with existing social housing demolition, schemes with planning approval, including schemes under construction)

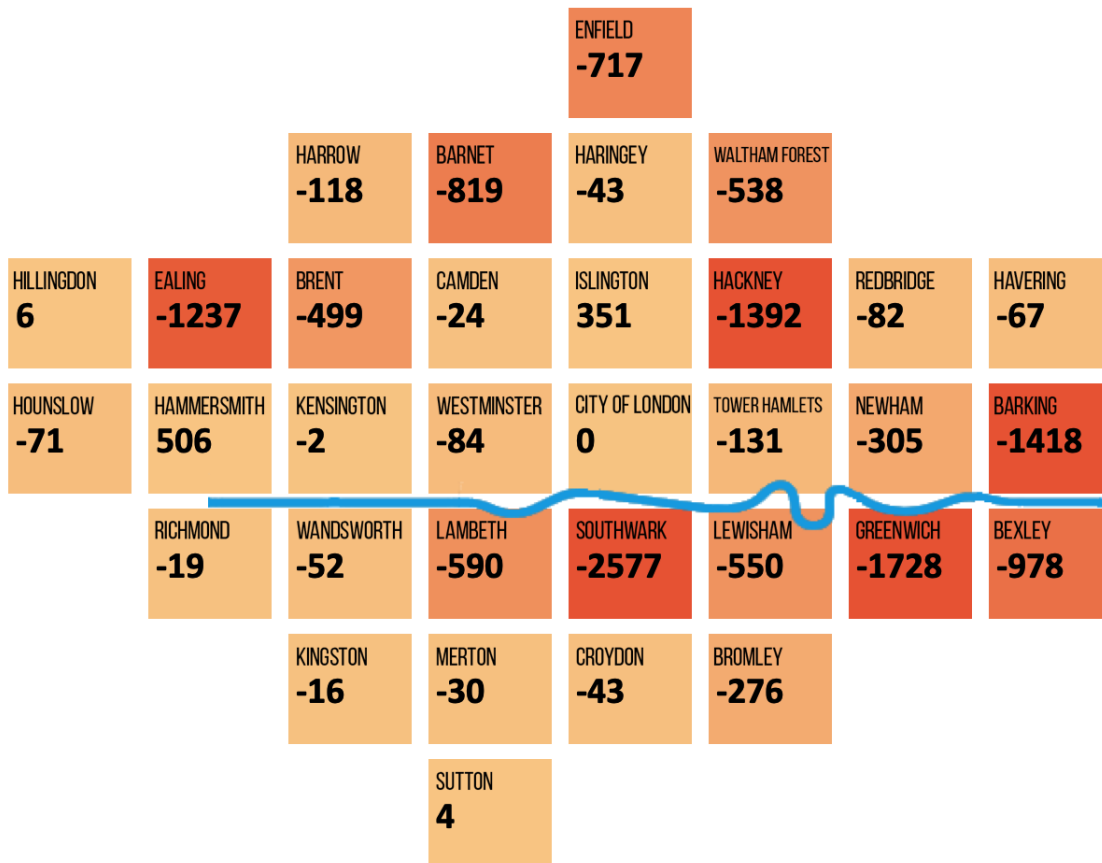


## Total impact since 2003:

Overall, the net loss of social rented homes across London for schemes given planning permission since 2003 has now reached a total of **13,539**.

## Total impact of London estate schemes, completed and planned

(Net loss/gain of social housing. Data from London Development Database, July 2020, schemes since 2003 on sites with existing social housing demolition)



## New applications:

A net total of **1,430** social rented homes will be lost in schemes which have been given planning permission since April 2018.

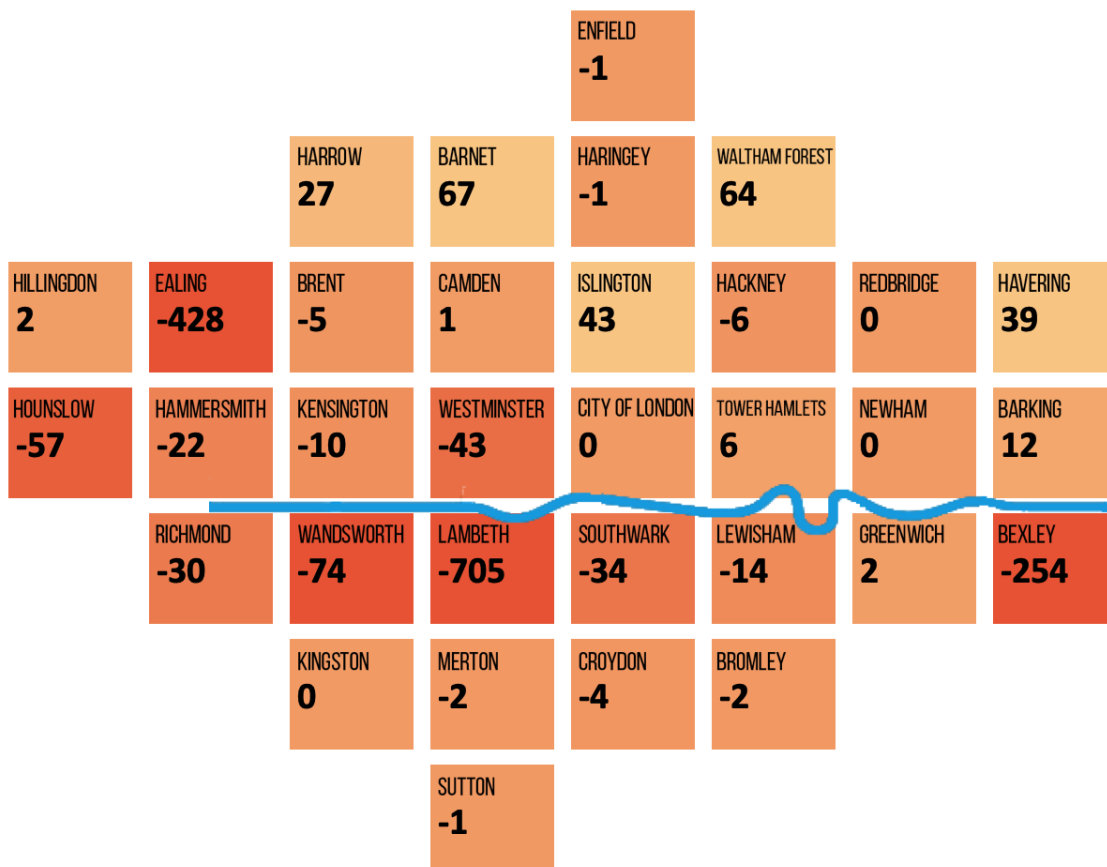
The boroughs with the highest totals for social housing net loss in this dataset are Lambeth, Ealing and Bexley.

Examples of schemes within each of these boroughs contributing to the totals are:

- **Lambeth:** Clapham Park Estate, Westbury Estate (part), South Lambeth Estate (part)
- **Ealing:** South Acton Estate
- **Bexley:** Arthur Street Estate

## Impact of new applications, on sites with social housing, since Apr 2018

(Social housing impact of new applications added to London Development Database since April 2018 on sites with at least one unit of existing social housing)



## Impact of resident ballots

A funding condition requiring ballots for residents on estates facing demolition was introduced by the Mayor after a long campaign, and finally came into force in July 2018.<sup>6</sup>

These ballots are a funding requirement – not a planning requirement – but I would expect this new policy to have a good effect on proposed schemes. Plans that involve mass demolition without replacement or a good deal for tenants are unlikely to get voted through.

However, there is no real evidence yet in schemes in the planning database of the effect of this hard-won policy.

One problem is that the Mayor gave approval for the grant funding of dozens of schemes in the months just before the policy was introduced.<sup>7</sup> Several of these schemes already had planning permission and these are reflected in this analysis. When other schemes from this batch of exemptions come forward to the planning stage, this may increase the net loss of council homes in future too.

GLA data show that, so far, **ten resident ballots have resulted in a positive result** for proposals involving the demolition and redevelopment of estates.<sup>8</sup> These schemes are all expected to result in a net gain of council homes when they gain planning permission. However, these are not yet reflected in the data.

**And for the first time in September 2020, a resident ballot resulted in a negative result.**

At Juniper Crescent and Gilbey's Yard in Camden, owned by housing association One Housing, residents voted no to a proposal to demolish and replace their homes.<sup>9</sup>

Their landlord has now promised further engagement around whether to develop new proposals, and I am pleased to see the way this result has been accepted.<sup>10</sup>

Residents having a final say over estate redevelopment plans should lead to better proposals coming forward in the first place and more schemes being approved by residents. However, having any negative decisions respected and acted upon is also important.

## References

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- <sup>5</sup> London Development Database SQL extract. London Datastore, Jul 2020  
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<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/sian-berry/give-estate-residents-a-say-in-planning-decisions>
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- <sup>10</sup> London regeneration ballot rejected by residents for the first time over social rent concerns. Inside Housing, Sep 2020 <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/london-regeneration-ballot-rejected-by-residents-for-the-first-time-over-social-rent-concerns-67849>