

**(By Email)**

Our reference: MGLA060622-2383

Date: 17 June 2022

Dear

Thank you for your request for information which the Greater London Authority (GLA) received on 04 June 2022. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested:

*I'd like to make a Freedom of Information Request for a copy of a letter that was sent from the Greater London Authority to Ealing Council on 24 May 2022 titled "Electricity Capacity in West London".*

*The existence of this letter is as reported by The Economist on 2 June 2022 at <https://www.economist.com/britain/2022/06/02/britains-overstretched-electricity-grid-is-delaying-housing-projects>*

*Please also include any relevant documents that are related to this letter, such as reports, data, or other correspondence. This would include anything related to electricity network capacity in West London.*

Please find below the information we hold within the scope of your request.

We have received your FOI request regarding capacity issues in West London and have responded to your specific queries below. We have also provided an explanation of the situation and our role in it, which we hope will be helpful.

**Ealing letter/other correspondence:** We have attached the letter to the London Borough of Ealing that you requested. We have sent the same letter to all London boroughs' Heads of Housing, and a number of social housing providers.

**Data/Reports:** We have received GIS data on SSEN's current capacity constraints in West London that was provided to us under a data sharing agreement and is not able to be shared more widely. Detailed capacity constraint information can have an impact on the viability of all development in the planning process in the area, and on approved development that is moving toward delivery. It also has the potential to significantly impact on land values until the issue is resolved. For these reasons, the data is deemed commercially sensitive.

You may be interested in looking into SSEN's open data portal and additional tools [here](#).

We don't hold any reports on this subject.

**Explanation:** We first learned about this issue when affordable housing developers with schemes in West London and boroughs within SSEN's coverage area approached the GLA's Housing & Land and Infrastructure teams in March 2022. SSEN is the distribution network operator in parts of Ealing, Hounslow, and Hillingdon. Developers and boroughs shared that SSEN could not offer them electricity connections until the late 2020s, or in some cases, 2030. This represented a delay of a number of years beyond what developers expected. It became clear that this issue is impacting a number of developers and borough-led schemes in the relevant areas. Developers are concerned about the deliverability of their projects as a result.

SSEN explained to us that the issue is due to a lack of capacity within the electricity network. Resolving the capacity issue is dependent on upgrades to National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)'s transmission network. SSEN has said that the capacity issue was unexpected and is the result of data centres and batteries requesting and securing connections—rapidly reserving capacity that otherwise might have gone to developers. SSEN has said that this unexpected demand from data centres and batteries is equivalent to the demand from tens of thousands of homes. NGET has shared that the transmission network is also seeing a high volume of requests from data centres and batteries wanting connections directly to the transmission network. NGET already has upgrades planned to the transmission network, but these will not be complete until 2029.

City Hall, having learned about these challenges, is speaking to the relevant infrastructure providers—SSEN, NGET, and the Electricity System Operator (ESO - a legally separate part of National Grid Group) as well as Ofgem, the energy regulator—to bottom out the issue and explore potential solutions. City Hall's Infrastructure Coordination Service has an active interest in convening these discussions because of its work to improve how infrastructure is planned and delivered across London. The Mayor holds strong relationships with energy providers and regulators through his London Infrastructure Group, which convenes CEO-level leaders from across the infrastructure sector to resolve challenges, identify opportunities, and work collaboratively toward decarbonisation, among other priorities. City Hall officers are in ongoing discussion with SSEN, NGET, the ESO, and Ofgem, which are undertaking internal analyses to arrive at both short term options to resolve the urgent situation described here, and also longer-term strategic approaches to prevent similar situations from arising in the future.

City Hall is concerned about these capacity issues because of the Mayor's objectives around delivering affordable housing, which can be found in his [Housing Strategy](#). The Mayor is also committed to achieving Net Zero by 2030, and sufficient electricity capacity is a key component of his preferred pathway. City Hall anticipates an increase in electrified heating in new development, more retrofit of electrified heating to existing buildings, and more electric vehicle charge point installation between now and 2030. More information about the Mayor's decarbonisation targets can be found [here](#)—including a report by Element Energy and the Mayor's response.

City Hall is currently leading on the delivery of Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP)—a cutting-edge method to understand energy demands in particular areas as a result of good growth and decarbonisation. The Infrastructure Coordination Service has partnered with Tower Hamlets to deliver an LAEP in the Isle of Dogs, and is now launching a subregional LAEP process with West London boroughs. The subregional LAEP will help West London boroughs and energy providers arrive at a shared view on upcoming electricity demand, and suitable solutions to meet it. This should help the area to plan effectively and avoid similar issues in years and decades to come.

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**Going forward:** City Hall will also look to engage Government departments like BEIS, Her Majesty's Treasury, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure the urgent West London issue is resolved as a matter of priority.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA060622-2383.

Yours sincerely

## **Information Governance Officer**

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the GLA's FOI complaints and internal review procedure, available at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>

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London Borough of Ealing

Department: Housing & Land

Date: 24 May 2022

By email

Dear [REDACTED]

### Electricity capacity in West London

We have become aware of an issue relating to the availability of electricity capacity in West London. Electricity distribution companies are telling some of our partners looking to develop homes in West London that electricity connections will not be available for their sites until 2027 to 2030, once National Grid has undertaken upgrades to increase capacity.

The increased demand for electricity capacity in the area is believed to be largely due to a rapid influx of batteries and data centres. These uses often place huge demands on the electricity supply as compared to other uses such as housing developments.

Electricity distribution companies are not permitted by Ofgem to prioritise types of development – the allocation is currently on a first-come, first-served basis. And while housing developers tend to make capacity requests later on in the design process, those delivering data centre projects appear to apply at an early stage. There is therefore a risk that this problem does not materialise for housing projects until plans for these projects are more advanced.

The GLA's Infrastructure Coordination Service is working with National Grid and SSEN to explore potential solutions to this issue. I would encourage you to make your colleagues, partners and stakeholders aware of the issue and engage with your electricity distribution company early on in projects in order to understand and mitigate for any capacity issues that might affect delivery.

Please let me know if you become aware of particular projects that are affected and if you would like to discuss the matter further.

Yours

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