



**Sian Berry AM**  
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Councillor Nicky Aiken, Leader of the Council, and  
Councillor Rachael Robathan, Cabinet Member for  
Finance, Property and Regeneration  
City of Westminster Council  
By email

17 June 2019

Dear Councillors Aiken and Robathan,

**Ebury Bridge estate – applying for GLA housing grant**

I note from a recent cabinet decision document, that your council's plans for the Ebury Bridge estate now involve pursuing an entirely council-funded (through the HRA and Westminster's wholly owned housing company) demolition and rebuilding proposal, and that you are in the process of carrying out design workshops with selected residents from the estate.<sup>1</sup>

These documents say that your current plans for the estate (phases 1 and 2 combined) include 45 per cent affordable housing and 198 replacement council homes, and indicate that you intend to bring forward planning applications for an overall masterplan and details of phase 1 towards the end of this year.

In previous replies to me in January 2018, you have stated that you do not intend to offer residents a further ballot with the power to approve or reject your new plans. Your pursuit of options that do not involve applying for GLA housing grants appear to be intended, at least partly, to avoid the requirement to hold such a ballot, which has been a condition of Mayoral funding since the final guidance on ballots was published in July 2018.<sup>2,3</sup>

I am writing today to draw your attention to requirements in the draft new London Plan, which ask councils and developers to apply for grants in order to maximise affordable housing in new developments.

The relevant policies are H5 Delivering affordable housing, H6 Threshold approach to applications, and H10 Redevelopment of existing housing and estate regeneration. Extracts from the current drafts of these policies are reproduced below.<sup>4</sup>



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I believe these planning policies mean that, at Ebury Bridge, your council should be complying fully with the Mayor's funding guidance on estate regeneration, in anticipation of applying for grants. This would ensure your plans are compliant with the likely London Plan policies that will be in place when they come forward for planning permission.

I also believe that the need to apply for grants will mean your council will also need to offer a binding ballot to current residents whose homes are scheduled for demolition. You should be engaging with residents appropriately and informing them that you are preparing to conduct such a ballot.

Please could you consider these points and respond to me as soon as possible with:

- a) Your interpretation of these policies and supporting text in the new London Plan, as they relate to the need to apply for grant in order to maximise affordable housing provision,
- b) Whether you intend to apply for grant in order to produce a scheme that is compliant with these policies, and
- c) Whether you will begin making plans now for a binding ballot of residents in order to comply with the Mayor's guidance on grant funding?

Yours sincerely,



**Sian Berry**  
**Green Party Member of the London Assembly**

**Draft London Plan policy extracts:**

**Policy H5 Delivering affordable housing**

A The strategic target is for 50 per cent of all new homes delivered across London to be genuinely affordable. Specific measures to achieve this aim include:

- 1) requiring major developments which trigger affordable housing requirements to provide affordable housing through the threshold approach (Policy H6 Threshold approach to applications)
- 2) using grant to increase affordable housing delivery beyond the level that would otherwise be provided

**Policy H6 Threshold approach to applications**

E Where an application does not meet the requirements set out in part C it must follow the Viability Tested Route. This requires detailed supporting viability evidence to be submitted in a standardised and accessible format as part of the application:



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- 1) the borough, and where relevant the Mayor, should scrutinise the viability information to ascertain the maximum level of affordable housing using the methodology and assumptions set out in this Plan and the Affordable Housing and Viability SPG

### **Policy H10 Redevelopment of existing housing and estate regeneration**

A Loss of existing housing should be replaced by new housing at existing or higher densities with at least the equivalent level of overall floorspace. Loss of hostels, staff accommodation, and shared and supported accommodation that meet an identified housing need should be satisfactorily re-provided to an equivalent or better standard.

B Loss of existing affordable housing should not be permitted unless it is replaced by equivalent or better quality accommodation, providing at least an equivalent level of affordable housing floorspace on an identical or equivalent basis. All such schemes are required to follow the Viability Tested Route and should produce an uplift in affordable housing provision where viable.

### **Also relevant are sections 4.5.3 and 4.6.9 of supporting text:**

4.5.3 Schemes are expected to deliver at least the threshold level of affordable housing without grant or public subsidy and to increase this proportion through the use of grant and other subsidy, where available. Only where there are clear barriers to delivery and it is fully justified through detailed viability evidence, in line with the methodology and assumptions set out in Policy H6 Threshold approach to applications and the Mayor's Affordable Housing and Viability SPG, should a lower level of affordable housing be considered.

4.6.9 All schemes are expected to maximise the delivery of genuinely affordable housing and make the most efficient use of available resources to achieve this objective. Where grant or other public subsidy is available and would increase the proportion of affordable housing, this should be utilised. The higher proportion of affordable housing should be set out in the Section 106 agreement as being subject to grant availability, alongside the proportion viable without grant. Funding will be available on a tariff basis, details of which are set out in the Mayor's Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2147. Applications for schemes of 150 units or more must evidence that they have sought grant to increase levels of affordable housing. Generally, this will be through evidenced discussions with the local authority and registered providers of social housing. Further detail is provided in the Affordable Housing and Viability SPG.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Westminster Council cabinet decision report:

<https://westminster.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s31836/Cabinet%20Member%20Report%20-%20Ebury%20Bridge%20Estate%20Renewal.pdf>



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Which contains these revised tenure plans:

Tenure	July 2018 Cabinet Report	Current Proposal
Replacement Social Rent Homes	198	198
New Affordable Rent Homes (Social & Intermediate)	144	145
Market & Discounted Rent Homes	0	253
Sale & Discounted Sale Homes	408	156
Total Homes	750	752

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Council snubs Khan grant offer due to estate regeneration plans. Inside Housing, October 2018 <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/westminster-council-snubs-khan-grant-offer-due-to-estate-regeneration-plans--58859>

<sup>3</sup> Mayor's ballots requirements for estate regeneration, July 2018 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/requirement-for-estate-regeneration-ballots>

<sup>4</sup> London Plan draft with minor amendments, July 2018 [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft\\_london\\_plan\\_-\\_showing\\_minor\\_suggested\\_changes\\_july\\_2018.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft_london_plan_-_showing_minor_suggested_changes_july_2018.pdf)



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