

Subject: Options for Accommodating London's Growth

Report to: Planning Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 22 January 2015

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out background information for a discussion with invited experts to establish some of the key issues that need to be addressed in terms of options for accommodating London's future growth.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to hearing from, and putting questions to, a number of invited experts on the issues to be considered when planning London's future growth.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In early January 2015 it is estimated that London will surpass its previous 1939 population peak of 8.6 million. Projections suggest that between 2011 and 2050, London is projected to grow by 3.1 million or 37 per cent. London's population will reach around 11.27 million by 2050.
- 3.2 The Further Alterations to the London Plan set a ten-year housing target for 42,000 homes a year, but outlines an annual housing need of at least 49,000. Increasingly the debate has focussed on where, and how, this growth should take place.
- 3.3 English planning policy has for the last 20 years promoted more sustainable patterns of development, with a priority to make better use of previously-developed (brownfield) land in existing towns and cities as the focus for additional housing.
- 3.4 The Mayor's existing approach to the spatial development of London is aligned with this policy direction: "growth will be supported and managed across all parts of London to ensure it takes place within the current boundaries without encroaching on the Green Belt, or on London's protected open spaces."¹

¹ London Plan Policy 1.1 – Delivering the strategic vision and objectives for London

- 3.5 The Mayor's draft Infrastructure Plan confirms the intention to continue this approach – but only up until 2025² when there is a suggestion the large reservoir of brownfield land within the capital will begin to run dry, although new brownfield sites are always coming forward through redevelopment.
- 3.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 retains, as one of its 12 core planning principles, the aim of encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). It further supports this policy by noting that “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”³
- 3.7 However, some commentators have interpreted the NPPF as somewhat relaxing previous policy: “the NPPF also effectively ends the previous national brownfield-first policy, and local authorities will now be free to set their own targets, so there will longer be a national target for new homes being provided on brownfield land.”⁴
- 3.8 The CPRE is concerned that 'brownfield first' development is no longer required under the national planning policy framework introduced by the present government in 2012.”⁵
- 3.9 The recent Lyons review noted that it is “clear that the principle of brownfield first is right and should continue with a sequential test that ensures that such sites are considered first for new development, but the experiences of unintended consequences of national brownfield policies illustrate the importance of a more tailored approach which can respond to local circumstances and address the particular barriers to unlock development on stalled brownfield sites.”⁶

4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 The current London Plan concludes that the “only prudent course is to plan for continued growth” and estimates the projected increase in households (and by implication the new homes required) to be 980,000 in the 25 years to 2036.
- 4.2 While the current approach (as set out in paragraph 3.4) focusses new housing on brownfield land within London's boundaries, a range of options exist for accommodating growth in the longer term. These may be characterised as:
- Maximising London's brownfield potential;
 - Intensifying suburban development;
 - Accommodating growth outside of London; and,
 - Greenfield development.

Issues for discussion

- 4.4 Members may wish to use this meeting to discuss a number of themes, for example:
- What is London's brownfield land capacity and how can this be maximised?
 - What are the implications for suburban intensification and how can this be achieved?

² London Infrastructure Plan 2050, a consultation, July 2014, page 66

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/London%20Infrastructure%20Plan%202050%20Consultation.pdf>

³ National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012, paragraph 87

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

⁴ <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/inside-out/6516344.bloglead?tagcode=622%7Cbrownfield-first>

⁵ Removing obstacles to brownfield development, CPRE, September 2014

⁶ Mobilising across the nation to build the homes our children need. The Lyons Housing Review, October 2014

http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The_Lyons_Housing_Review_2.pdf

- How, and should, some of London’s growth be accommodated in the wider South East?
- How might greenfield sites be developed sustainably to meet the demand for housing?
- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of pursuing these options?
- Are there other options that would negate the need to build on London’s green spaces?

Invited guests

4.5 The following guests have confirmed attendance at this meeting:

- Jonathan Manns, Director of Planning, Colliers International
- Catriona Riddell, Director, Catriona Riddell Associates
- Marcel Steward, Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant
- Philipp Rode, Executive Director, LSE Cities
- A representative from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

.None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985	
List of Background Papers:	
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