

# Subject: Minor Alterations to the London Plan and Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Consultations

Report to: Planning Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 16 June 2015

This report will be considered in public

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the consultations on the Mayor's proposals to further amend the London Plan and his Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Members note this report as background to the discussion with invited experts on various aspects of the Mayor's proposals to revise the London Plan and Housing SPG, and to use information resulting from the meeting in the Committee's response to the Mayor's consultations.**
- 2.2 **That Members delegate authority to the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chair, to agree the Committee's final responses to the consultations on:**
- **The Minor Alterations to the London Plan, by 22 June 2015, and**
  - **The Draft Interim Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance, by 7 August 2015.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the Mayor to produce a London Plan (the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London). The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years.
- 3.2 Section 339(1) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the Mayor to keep the London Plan under review. On 10 March 2015, the Mayor published (i.e. adopted) the Further Alterations to

the London Plan (FALP). From this date, the FALP are operative as formal alterations to the London Plan and form part of the development plan for Greater London.

- 3.3 On 11 May 2015 the Mayor published for six weeks public consultation two sets of Minor Alterations to the London Plan – on Housing Standards and on Parking Standards. These minor alterations have been prepared to bring the London Plan in line with new national housing standards and car parking policy.
- 3.4 On 19 May 2015 the Chair of the London Assembly wrote to the Chair of the Planning Committee asking the Committee to formally respond to the consultation on the Assembly's behalf.
- 3.5 On 15 May 2015 the Mayor also published the Draft Interim Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks. The draft Housing SPG provides revised guidance on how to implement the housing policies in the London Plan. The proposed revisions take account of the Further Alterations to the London Plan and how London's housing standards will be affected by the introduction of the Government's new national technical standards.

## **4. Issues for Consideration**

### **Minor Alterations to the London Plan – housing standards and parking standards**

- 4.1 The minor alterations have been prepared to bring the London Plan in line with new national housing standards and car parking policy. Both sets of minor alterations will be considered by an independent planning inspector at a joint public examination to be held in the autumn.

### **Housing standards**

- 4.2 In March 2015 the Government published new national technical housing standards. These new standards include 'optional' Building Regulations for access and water, and a new national space standard. A number of standards have also been removed by the review, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and the Lifetime Homes concept.
- 4.3 The Government's aim in introducing the new national technical standards is to rationalise the many differing existing local standards into a simpler, streamlined system; to reduce burdens; and to bring forward much needed high quality, accessible and sustainable homes.
- 4.4 The Mayor wants to ensure that, as far as possible, the standards reflect the specific housing design and quality requirements needed to address the distinct circumstances of London and particularly those that arise from the unique density and flattened nature of London's housing development.
- 4.5 The Mayor is keen for the London Plan to reflect the higher national 'optional' standards allowed for by Government, and to do so they must be incorporated into the London Plan, backed by a demonstration that they address a clearly evidenced need and their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the NPPF. Without these steps the lower Building Regulation standards will apply.
- 4.6 The Housing Standards Minor Alterations comprise amendments to four London Plan policies and their supporting text:
  - Policy 3.5 Quality and design of housing developments (including Table 3.3 Minimum space standards for new development).
  - Policy 3.8 Housing choice.

- Policy 5.2 Minimising carbon dioxide emissions.
- Policy 5.15 Water use and supplies.

4.7 There are amendments to just the supporting text of a further two Plan policies:

- Policy 5.3 Sustainable design and construction.
- Policy 7.1 Lifetime neighbourhoods.

4.8 In addition, the Glossary (Annex Six to the London Plan) has been updated to reflect the definitions used by the new national technical standards. Some of the alterations are simply to remove references to standard regimes that the Government has discontinued as part of its new national housing standards (such as Lifetime Homes and the Code for Sustainable Homes).

### **Parking standards**

4.9 In January 2015 the Government indicated to the Mayor that it expected an early set of revisions to the London Plan to reflect its view on car parking that more spaces should be provided alongside new homes especially in areas of low public transport accessibility.

4.10 In the current London Plan the Mayor recognises the flexible approach advocated by the National Planning Policy Framework on parking standards, and the abolition of maximum parking standards in national policy. Whilst the Mayor considers that there are sound reasons for retaining residential parking standards in core and inner London, he recognises the opportunity to adopt a more flexible approach in parts of outer London, especially where public transport accessibility levels are lower.

4.11 In support of a review of the London Plan's residential parking standards in outer London, evidence gathering was undertaken by Transport for London (TfL) and five meetings of the Mayor's Outer London Commission (OLC) took place in late 2014 and early 2015 to discuss the extent and nature of possible plan alterations. The OLC has produced a report to the Mayor setting out a recommended approach to parking which is reflected in the proposed Parking Standards Minor Alterations.

4.12 The draft Parking Standards Minor Alterations are limited in scope. They comprise:

- Three amendments to London Plan Policy 6.13 Parking
- Three additional explanatory paragraphs supporting the policy
- Amendments to the notes to the 'Parking for residential development' section of Table 6.2 Car parking standards, and
- A minor amendment to the Glossary consisting of a factual update to the definition of Public Transport Accessibility Levels

### **Draft Interim Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Consultation**

4.13 The Housing SPG provides guidance on how to interpret and apply the housing policies of the London Plan and will play a key role in ensuring that boroughs attempt to meet the objectively assessed need for 49,000 new homes a year.

4.14 The existing (2012) Housing SPG is being revised to reflect the 2015 London Plan and to provide updates and clarity where necessary. This requires a significant rewrite of some of the chapters (in particular the Supply chapter which deals with housing numbers). In addition, this SPG is being updated to reflect the proposed Minor Alterations to the London Plan (MALP) - Housing Standards (as set out in paragraphs 4.2 – 4.7 above) to show how London's standards will be affected by the introduction of the Government's new national technical standard.

## **Main changes**

### **Part 1 – Supply**

- 4.15 The supply section of the SPG;
- Focuses on increasing supply to meet need (delivering 49,000 homes a year). The section provides guidance to boroughs on how they can identify more capacity, and how they can ensure conformity with the London Plan;
  - Encourages boroughs to recognise how character can change over time and new development can positively enhance the character of an area; and
  - Promotes the optimisation of capacity in town centres and Opportunity/Intensification Areas, and on other large sites and surplus industrial land with good public transport accessibility and suggests boroughs should consider applying unit mix polices flexibly in these locations.

### **Part 2 – Quality**

- 4.16 This chapter has been updated to reflect the government’s new national technical standards and the draft MALP:
- The distinction between good practice and baseline standards has been removed.
  - Two key standards not affected by the national technical standards have been updated to improve implementation (number of units per core – standard 3.2.1 and dual aspect standard 5.2.1).

### **Part 3- Choice**

- 4.17 The SPG provides a range of indicative need figures to inform the development of local and sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessments:
- Guidance is provided on meeting the housing needs of London’s older population.
  - The long term private rented sector is encouraged, with advice given on affordable housing, claw back mechanisms and flexibility on unit mix.
  - The SPG provides guidance on how the London Plan’s requirement for affordable student accommodation should be applied.

### **Part 4 – Affordable housing**

- 4.18 This section -
- Provides guidance on intermediate housing products to ensure a range of provision and promotes consistent cross London eligibility requirements and, where local requirements are applied, ensures that these are only for three months;
  - Provides guidance on the Vacant Building Credit reflects the NPPG, but goes further in suggesting that a vacancy period should be set in policy;
  - Supports the use of ‘Existing Use Value plus’ in planning negotiations;
  - Provides guidance on the use of Contingent Obligations (review mechanisms);
  - Introduces the concept of fixed affordable housing percentages for housing zones and opportunity areas; and
  - Supports the NPPG in not requiring affordable housing contributions on sites delivering ten or less units (and are less than 1,000 square meters).
- 4.19 The consultation period will run for three months (until 7 August).

## Invited guests

4.20 The following guests have confirmed their attendance at the meeting:

- John Lett, GLA, Strategic Planning Manager, London Plan Team;
- Jennifer Peters, GLA, Senior Strategic Planner, London Plan Team;
- Peter Wright, Transport for London;
- Michael Bach, London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies;
- William McKee, Chair of the Outer London Commission; and
- James MacColl, Head of Campaigns, Campaign for Better Transport.

## 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.

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### List of appendices to this report:

None

### Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers:

Minor Alterations to the London Plan – Housing Standards and Parking Standards

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan/minor-alterations-to-the-london-plan-2015>

Draft Interim Housing SPG

<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Draft%20Interim%20Housing%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Guidance.pdf>

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