

Subject: Planning Committee: Legacy Report 2012 – 2016

Report to: Planning Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 10 March 2016

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Planning Committee's priorities, publications and additional work during the current Mayoral and Assembly term. It also summarises site visits undertaken by the Committee in conjunction with its investigations and provides an overview of media coverage received during this period.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 This legacy report provides an overview of the Committee's work and impact over the Mayoral and Assembly term 2012-2016.

Scrutinising the Mayor's planning function

- 3.2 The Mayor has significant powers in relation to strategic planning and therefore the future shape of London. Of these powers, the most important are:
- He is responsible for producing the London Plan - 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.
 - The Mayor has also considerable influence over the largest applications for development in the capital and is able to take over and decide those he believes are of significant importance.
 - The Mayor produces Supplementary Planning Guidance to provide further direction on policies in the London Plan that can't be addressed in sufficient detail in the plan itself.
 - The Mayor produces Opportunity Planning Frameworks to guide development in the areas of London with the biggest potential for development.

3.3 The Planning Committee's primary role is to scrutinise the detail of the London Plan, related guidance and the Mayor's use of his powers over strategic planning applications.

Priorities for investigation 2012/16

3.4 In May 2012 the Assembly agreed to set up the Planning Committee in its current format, as a two party, five Member, Committee.

3.5 The Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the Mayor to produce a London Plan and to keep it under review taking into account the changing nature of London's population and economy and the need to keep it up-to-date and in line with national planning policy.

3.6 Since its inauguration in 2012, the Committee has used three central aspects of strategic planning policy for managing and prioritising its work programme:

- Work on the revision of the London Plan, the Mayor's 2020 Vision and Infrastructure Plan.
- Policy documents/guidance supplementary to the London Plan (SPGs).
- Opportunity area frameworks – the Committee resolved to respond to consultations.

Summary of main areas of activity

3.7 A combination of these statutory requirements, considerable changes in Government policy and the need to plan for London's record growth, have largely shaped the Planning Committee's work over the last Mayoral term.

3.8 During the Mayoral term 2012-16 the Committee held 26 formal meetings resulting in:

- Contributions to three revisions of the London Plan (including public consultations and participation in the Examinations in Public);
- Responses to nine other consultations on major areas of Mayoral and Government policy changes;
- Production of four reports on specific policy issues; and,
- Producing a series of letters and site visits.

3.9 Appendix 1 sets out a full list of reports, consultation responses and letters produced by the Committee, and visits undertaken.

4. Issues for Consideration

4.1 The majority of Committee outputs have related to consultations, ranging from the London Plan, policy guidance (Mayoral and national) and planning related proposals such as the Infrastructure Plan and Mayoral Development Corporations.

4.2 However, a limited number of reports were also produced that usefully brought together the considerable amount of work done through Committee meetings that were undertaken to formulate the consultation responses.

Reports

The future of London's town centres - June 2013

- 4.3 This report was primarily published to inform the Mayor's policy and guidance on town centres. It brought together information from two Committee meetings as well as a range of previous work on London's suburbs and government proposals to allow changes of use from employment and retail to housing.
- 4.4 The report concluded that town centres must change from being primarily shopping destinations to dynamic and mixed centres for communities offering a range of retail, leisure, public services and housing. Town centres must remain flexible, and provide adaptable spaces that are programmable and responsive to changing needs and to challenges such as internet shopping and out of town retailing.
- 4.5 The report called for more visionary encouragement for innovative, integrated approaches and stronger links with other Mayoral strategies. The report recommended that public services should be encouraged to remain and return to the town centre. Libraries, educational facilities, post offices, GP surgeries, and other public and community services are all important anchors bringing people to the town centre.

Localism in London: What's the Story? - November 2014

- 4.6 Localism is a key part of the Government's intention to devolve power to local communities to enable them to shape their neighbourhoods. This report reviewed the implementation in London of a number of measures contained in the Localism Act in 2011 – specifically those that encouraged the development of neighbourhood plans and the ability of a community to protect locally valued community assets.
- 4.7 The report was the culmination of discussions held through a series of meetings from 2011 to 2013, and reports and updates in 2012 and 2013 monitoring the progress of various measures in the Localism Act.
- 4.8 Key findings of the report were that the legislation was designed primarily for smaller, more homogenous areas than can be found in London; London's complex network of mixed communities with diverse interests make even defining neighbourhood areas a difficult and time consuming process; and the use of new rights for individuals and communities to take over community assets in the Localism Act appears to be more widespread across London.
- 4.9 The Committee believes neighbourhood planning should be encouraged in London and used the report to set out areas that needed to be developed to help foster its spread across the city.

Up or Out: A false choice. Options for London's growth - January 2016

- 4.10 Projections indicate that London is on course to grow to 10 million by 2030. This report looks at where London's growth might take place and how it can be managed.
- 4.11 The report is based on issues discussed across a number of Planning Committee meetings held in the year 2014/15 on the issue of housing in London. It also draws on other related work such as the Assembly's response to the Infrastructure Plan, recent London Plan revisions as well as work on Opportunity Areas and Mayoral Development Corporations.

- 4.12 The report identifies where housing might be built (sites and locations) and how density can be increased sustainably through innovative design approaches. It specifically focusses on three aspects: whether the “compact-city” approach can deliver the homes needed without jeopardising sustainability, particularly in Inner London; how density can be increased through different typologies and whether tall buildings contribute to meeting housing need; and how areas in suburban London and around London’s boundaries might contribute more homes.
- 4.13 The report poses a number of questions to the new Mayor in terms of addressing the issue of London’s growth.

Tax trial: A Land Value Tax for London? Rapporteur Report - February 2016

- 4.14 London’s growth reflects its success, but it also creates an urgent need to incentivise housing building and the delivery of infrastructure. Fiscal devolution has opened the door for new ways of encouraging development and raising the capital required to support this growth. This report examines the case for and against using a Land Value Tax to incentivise and fund development, and analyses if it could work in London.
- 4.15 The report concludes that there is a clear need for new mechanisms to fund London’s growth and the current appetite for devolution, especially to directly elected Mayors, is encouraging innovation in funding and delivery.
- 4.16 The report recommends further work is undertaken to understand if the Mayor has sufficient power to implement a Land Value Tax and, if not, what more needs to be devolved. Furthermore, a Land Value Tax pilot project could more rapidly bring forward housing development in sites where the Mayor has planning powers. It calls on the new Mayor to take these ideas forward.

Planning Committee co-ordinated work

- 4.17 Mayoral proposals involving the London Plan, the Infrastructure Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance require a considerable amount of cross-Committee collaboration. In these instances the Planning Committee has taken the lead in terms of co-ordinating an agreed Assembly response.

London Infrastructure Plan 2050

- 4.17 According to current projections, London’s population will hit 10 million by the early 2030s. The capital’s infrastructure is already under pressure from this growth, and climate change presents further long term challenges. In 2013 the Mayor announced he would be developing a Long Term Infrastructure Investment Plan for London to help the city prepare better for this growth over the very long term.
- 4.18 The Planning Committee co-ordinated a response on behalf of the Assembly with input from the Budget and Performance, Environment, Regeneration and Transport Committees. On 31 October 2014 the Committee responded to the Mayor’s consultation on the London Infrastructure Plan detailing the nature and scale of infrastructure needed to accommodate London’s growth sustainably and how it might be delivered.

London Plan Alterations – 2012, 2014 and 2015

- 4.19 As set out above, the GLA Act 1999 requires the Mayor to produce a London Plan and to keep it under review. In the course of the last Mayoral term the Plan was subject to three sets of alteration. These alterations covered revisions to policy across a number of areas including: affordable housing

definitions and standards, hazardous installations, cycle parking, climate change, retail and employment and transport issues ranging from Crossrail to parking standards.

- 4.20 In all three sets of revisions the Planning Committee co-ordinated the response on behalf of the Assembly, with inputs from other Assembly Committees where the proposals cut across their terms of reference.
- 4.21 The Planning Committee also led the Assembly's representation at the three Examinations in Public, with input from other Committees, covering some 20 issues that were identified by the Planning Inspectors, over several days of discussions.
- 4.22 The GLA Act gives the Assembly the power to reject Mayoral draft strategies prior to their publication. The London Plan is one of such strategies that must be considered by the Assembly and, potentially, rejected. Prior to this decision, the Planning Committee provides a briefing to the whole Assembly, using the relevant Committee work as an evidence base for the Assembly debate.

Site visits and other activity

- 4.23 The Chair of the Committee wrote a number of letters to the Mayor and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The subject of these letters covered: the protection of London's wharves; the impact of relaxations to permitted development rights; London's skyline and the viability of development. Two site visits were also undertaken to the Euston Opportunity Area and the Siemens Crystal in association with Mayoral consultations on Opportunity Area and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Media overview

- 4.23 The Committee's focus on Mayoral proposals for the London Plan and other policy guidance has been reflected in consistent coverage in the specialist media. The Committee's evidence gathering meetings are regularly covered in the technical press, highlighting the topicality of the Committee's work in the sphere of planning and development.
- 4.24 The reports bringing together work on the broader strategic issues for London have attracted wider coverage, from London and national press. Coverage of the Town Centres, Localism and London's growth reports all featured in print and broadcast media.
- 4.25 The Committee's meetings on London's skyline and tall buildings, the impact of the new freedoms to change the use of buildings from offices to residential, the implications of vacant building credits and the viability of development in London were also all favourably reported.

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 financial implications to the Greater London Authority arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report: Appendix 1: List of reports, consultation responses and letters produced by the Planning Committee, and visits undertaken.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
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List of Background Papers: None

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