

# **Chapter 1 Planning London's Future - Good Growth**

## **The London Plan March 2021**

A drawing of London city with buildings and trees.

## **Key information**

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## **Good Growth**

1.0.1 Good Growth - growth that is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable – underpins the whole of the London Plan and each policy. It is the way in which sustainable development in London is to be achieved.

1.0.2 London’s growth and development is shaped by the decisions that are made every day by planners, planning applicants, decision-makers and Londoners across the city. Every individual decision to provide affordable housing helps to make the housing market fairer. Every decision to make a new development car-free helps Londoners to depend less on cars and to live healthier lives. Every decision to build or expand a school

improves the prospects of the next generation of Londoners.

1.0.3 Each week, hundreds of these individual decisions contribute to progress across London, shaping places and improving lives. Over the course of years, they can transform the whole city for the benefit of Londoners now and in the future.

1.0.4 The London Plan provides the strategic framework within which all these decisions are made. It guides boroughs' Development Plans to ensure that they are working towards a shared vision for London, and it establishes policies that allow everyone involved in new developments to know what is expected from them.

1.0.5 By setting a new level of ambition for the people who make all of London's planning decisions, this London Plan will help realise the Mayor's vision of creating a city for all Londoners, where no one is left behind.

## **Planning for Good Growth**

1.0.6 The London Plan covers the full range of planning issues, from the number of homes London needs to the design of its streets, and it is important that each policy is clear and implementable. But the Plan is not only a set of individual policies – taken together, these policies provide a vision for how London should sustainably grow and develop in the future.

1.0.7 London's global economy is the envy of other world cities and with good reason – it is the engine of the national economy and will sustain the level of population growth expected in London over the coming years. But to plan a city that works for all Londoners, as the population grows towards 10.8 million by 2041, it will be important to think about what the purpose of economic growth actually is.

1.0.8 A failure to consider this fundamental question has led to some of the most serious challenges London faces today. The growth in population and jobs has not been matched by the growth in the number and type of homes London needs, driving up rents and house prices to levels that have priced many Londoners out of the market. A focus on large multinational businesses in the centre of London has not been matched by economic development in other parts of the city. A failure to consider the wider implications of London's growth has increased car dependency, leading to low levels of physical activity, significant congestion, poor air quality and other environmental problems.

1.0.9 This London Plan takes a new approach. It plans for growth on the basis of its potential to improve the health and quality of life of all Londoners, to reduce inequalities and to make the city a better place to live, work and visit. It uses the opportunities of a rapidly-growing city to plan for a better future, using each planning decision to improve London, transforming the city over time. It plans not just for growth, but for Good Growth – sustainable growth that works for everyone using London's strengths to overcome its weaknesses.

1.0.10 A city that is planned well can improve as it grows. Planning for the right number of homes and higher levels of affordable housing will take advantage of London's growth to re-balance the housing market. Planning for mixed-use developments in all parts of London will spread the success of London's economy and create stronger communities where everyone feels welcome. Planning new developments to reduce car dependency will improve Londoners' health and make the city a better place to live. Planning for a 'smarter' city, with world-class digital connectivity will enable secure data to be better used to improve the lives of Londoners.

1.0.11 To ensure that London's growth is Good Growth, each of the policy areas in this Plan is informed by six Good Growth objectives:

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1.0.12 Planners, planning applicants and decision-makers should consider how their actions are helping to deliver these objectives as they work to develop and improve London. By doing so, they will keep London's development on track, ensuring that the growth of the city benefits all Londoners.

## **Building strong and inclusive communities**

### **Building strong and inclusive communities**

1.1.1 London is made up of diverse communities. Its neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, parks, community centres and all the other times and places Londoners come together give the city its cultural character and create its future. Planning for Good Growth means planning with these communities – both existing and new – making new connections and eroding inequalities.

1.1.2 London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, a place where everyone is welcome. 40 per cent of Londoners were born outside of the UK, and over 300 languages are spoken here. 40 per cent of Londoners are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, and the city is home to a million EU citizens, 1.2 million disabled people, and up to 900,000 people who identify as LGBT+. Over a fifth of London's population is under 16, but over the coming decades the number of Londoners aged 65 or over is projected to increase by 90 per cent. This diversity is essential to the success of London's communities. To maintain this London must remain open, inclusive and allow everyone to share in and contribute towards the city's success.

1.1.3 London is one of the richest cities in the world, but it is also home to some of the poorest communities in the country, with wealth unevenly distributed across the population and through different parts of the city. It is home to an ageing population, with more and more people facing the barriers that already prevent many from participating fully in their communities. Traffic dominates too many streets across the city, dividing communities and limiting the interactions that take place in neighbourhoods and town centres.

1.1.4 Delivering good quality, affordable homes, better public transport connectivity, accessible and welcoming public space, a range of workspaces in accessible locations, built forms that work with local heritage and identity, and social, physical and environmental infrastructure that meets London's diverse needs is essential if London is to maintain and develop strong and inclusive communities.

1.1.5 Early engagement with local people leads to better planning proposals, with Neighbourhood Plans providing a particularly good opportunity for communities to shape growth in their areas. Taking advantage of the knowledge and experience of local people will help to shape London's growth, creating a thriving city that works better for all Londoners.

## **GG1 Building strong and inclusive communities**

### **GG1 Building strong and inclusive communities**

Good growth is inclusive growth. To build on the city's tradition of openness, diversity and equality, and help deliver strong and inclusive communities, those involved in planning and development must:

A encourage early and inclusive engagement with stakeholders, including local communities, in the development of proposals, policies and area-based strategies

B seek to ensure changes to the physical environment to achieve an overall positive contribution to London

C provide access to good quality community spaces, services, amenities and infrastructure that accommodate, encourage and strengthen communities, increasing active participation and social integration, and addressing social isolation

D seek to ensure that London continues to generate a wide range of economic and other opportunities, and that everyone is able to benefit from these to ensure that London is a fairer, more inclusive and more equal city

E ensure that streets and public spaces are consistently planned for people to move around and spend time in comfort and safety, creating places where everyone is welcome, which foster a sense of belonging, which encourage community buy-in, and where communities can develop and thrive

F promote the crucial role town centres have in the social, civic, cultural and economic lives of Londoners, and plan for places that provide important opportunities for building relationships during the daytime, evening and night time

G ensure that new buildings and the spaces they create are designed to reinforce or enhance the identity, legibility, permeability, and inclusivity of neighbourhoods, and are resilient and adaptable to changing community requirements

H support and promote the creation of a London where all Londoners, including children and young people, older people, disabled people, and people with young children, as well as people with other protected characteristics, can move around with ease and enjoy the opportunities the city provides, creating a welcoming environment that everyone can use confidently, independently, and with choice and dignity, avoiding separation or segregation

I support and promote the creation of an inclusive London where all Londoners, regardless of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, religion, race, sexual orientation, social class, or whether they are pregnant or have children, can share in its prosperity, culture and community, minimising the barriers, challenges and inequalities they face.

## **Making the best use of land**

### **Making the best use of land**

1.2.1 London's population is set to grow from 8.9 million today to around 10.8 million by 2041. As it does so, employment is expected to increase on average by 49,000 jobs each year, reaching 6.9 million over the same period. This rapid growth will bring many opportunities, but it will also lead to increasing and competing pressures on the use of space. To accommodate growth while protecting the Green Belt, and for this growth to happen in a way that improves the lives of existing and new Londoners, this Plan proposes more efficient uses of the city's land.

1.2.2 The key to achieving this will be taking a rounded approach to the way neighbourhoods operate, making them work not only more space-efficiently but also better for the people who use them. This will mean creating places of higher density in appropriate locations to get more out of limited land, encouraging a mix of land uses, and co-locating different uses to provide communities with a wider range of services and amenities.

1.2.3 The benefits of this approach are wide-ranging, going well beyond the simple ability to provide more homes and jobs. High-density, mixed-use places support the clustering effect of businesses known as

‘agglomeration’, maximising job opportunities. They provide a critical mass of people to support the investment required to build the schools, health services, public transport and other infrastructure that neighbourhoods need to work. They are places where local amenities are within walking and cycling distance, and public transport options are available for longer trips, supporting good health, allowing strong communities to develop, and boosting the success of local businesses.

1.2.4 Making the best use of land means directing growth towards the most accessible and well-connected places, making the most efficient use of the existing and future public transport, walking and cycling networks. Integrating land use and transport in this way is essential not only to achieving the Mayor’s target for 80 per cent of all journeys to be made by walking, cycling and public transport, but also to creating vibrant and active places and ensuring a compact and well-functioning city.

1.2.5 All options for using the city’s land more effectively will need to be explored as London’s growth continues, including the redevelopment of brownfield sites and the intensification of existing places, including in outer London. New and enhanced transport links will play an important role in allowing this to happen, unlocking homes and jobs growth in new areas and ensuring that new developments are not planned around car use.

1.2.6 As London develops, the Mayor’s Good Growth by Design programme – which seeks to promote and deliver a better, more inclusive form of growth on behalf of all Londoners – will ensure that homes and other developments are of high quality. Existing green space designations will remain strong to protect the environment, and improvements to green infrastructure, biodiversity and other environmental factors, delivering more than 50 per cent green cover across London, will be important to help London become a National Park City.

1.2.7 London’s distinctive character and heritage is why many people want to come to the city. London’s heritage holds local and strategic significance for the city and for Londoners, and will be conserved and enhanced. As new developments are designed, the special features that Londoners value about a place, such as cultural, historic or natural elements, should be used positively to guide and stimulate growth, and create distinctive, attractive and cherished places.

1.2.8 Making the best use of land will allow the city to grow in a way that works for everyone. It will allow more high-quality homes and workspaces to be developed as London grows, while supporting local communities and creating new ones that can flourish in the future.

## **GG2 Making the best use of land**

### **GG2 Making the best use of land**

To create successful sustainable mixed-use places that make the best use of land, those involved in planning and development must:

A enable the development of brownfield land, particularly in Opportunity Areas, on surplus public sector land, and sites within and on the edge of town centres, as well as utilising small sites

B prioritise sites which are well-connected by existing or planned public transport

C proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land to support additional homes and workspaces, promoting higher density development, particularly in locations that are well-connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public transport, walking and cycling

D applying a design-led approach to determine the optimum development capacity of sites

E understand what is valued about existing places and use this as a catalyst for growth, renewal, and place-making, strengthening London’s distinct and varied character

F protect and enhance London's open spaces, including the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, designated nature conservation sites and local spaces, and promote the creation of new green infrastructure and urban greening, including aiming to secure net biodiversity gains where possible

G plan for good local walking, cycling and public transport connections to support a strategic target of 80 per cent of all journeys using sustainable travel, enabling car-free lifestyles that allow an efficient use of land, as well as using new and enhanced public transport links to unlock growth

H maximise opportunities to use infrastructure assets for more than one purpose, to make the best use of land and support efficient maintenance.

## **Creating a healthy city**

### **Creating a healthy city**

1.3.1 The mental and physical health of Londoners is, to a large extent, determined by the environment in which they live. Transport, housing, education, income, working conditions, unemployment, air quality, green space, climate change and social and community networks can have a greater influence on health than healthcare provision or genetics. Many of these determinants of health can be shaped by the planning system, and local authorities are accordingly responsible for planning and public health.

1.3.2 As set out in the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy, the scale of London's health inequalities is great and the need to reduce them is urgent. Healthy life expectancy is lower in more deprived areas, and the differences between parts of London is stark – more than 15 years for men and almost 19 years for women. London's ongoing growth provides an opportunity to reduce these inequalities. Delivering Good Growth will involve prioritising health in all of London's planning decisions, including through design that supports health outcomes, and the assessment and mitigation of any potential adverse impacts of development proposals on health and health inequality.

1.3.3 The causes of London's health problems are wide-ranging. Many of London's major health problems are related to inactivity. Currently only 34 per cent of Londoners report doing the 20 minutes of active travel each day that can help them to stay healthy, but good planning can help them to build this into their daily routine. Access to green and open spaces, including waterways, can improve health, but access and quality varies widely across the city. Excessive housing costs or living in a home that is damp, too hot or too cold can have serious health impacts. A healthy food environment and access to healthy food is vital for good health. Good planning can help address all these issues.

1.3.4 The Healthy Streets Approach outlined in this plan puts improving health and reducing health inequalities at the heart of planning London's public space. It will tackle London's inactivity crisis, improve air quality and reduce the other health impacts of living in a car-dominated city by planning street networks that work well for people on foot and on bikes, and providing public transport networks that are attractive alternatives to car use. It will also ensure that streets become more social spaces.

1.3.5 The social and environmental causes of ill-health are numerous and complex, and the people who are most affected by London's health inequalities tend also to be affected by other forms of inequality. Creating a healthy city with reduced health inequalities will make London fairer for everyone. The Mayor plays a pivotal role in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders from service providers, boroughs, communities and the private sector in order to provide a more integrated approach to promoting a healthy city and reducing health inequalities. The Mayor will co-ordinate investment and focus regeneration initiatives in those parts of London most affected by inequalities, including health inequalities.

## **GG3 Creating a healthy city**

### **GG3 Creating a healthy city**

To improve Londoners' health and reduce health inequalities, those involved in planning and development must:

A ensure that the wider determinants of health are addressed in an integrated and co-ordinated way, taking a systematic approach to improving the mental and physical health of all Londoners and reducing health inequalities

B promote more active and healthy lives for all Londoners and enable them to make healthy choices

C use the Healthy Streets Approach to prioritise health in all planning decisions

D assess the potential impacts of development proposals and Development Plans on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of communities, in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts, maximise potential positive impacts, and help reduce health inequalities, for example through the use of Health Impact Assessments

E plan for appropriate health and care infrastructure to address the needs of London's changing and growing population

F seek to improve London's air quality, reduce public exposure to poor air quality and minimise inequalities in levels of exposure to air pollution

G plan for improved access to and quality of green spaces, the provision of new green infrastructure, and spaces for play, recreation and sports

H ensure that new buildings are well-insulated and sufficiently ventilated to avoid the health problems associated with damp, heat and cold

I seek to create a healthy food environment, increasing the availability of healthy food and restricting unhealthy options.

## **Delivering the homes Londoners need**

### **Delivering the homes Londoners need**

1.4.1 Few things are as important as a suitable home, but for many Londoners the type of home they want, and should reasonably be able to expect, is out of reach. In 2016, the gap between average house prices in London and the rest of the country reached a record high, and the private rental cost of a one-bedroom home in London is now more than the average for a three-bedroom home in any other English region. A housing market that only works for the very wealthy does not work for London.

1.4.2 The state of London's housing market has implications for the makeup and diversity of the city. Affordable housing is central to allowing Londoners of all means and backgrounds to play their part in community life. Providing a range of high quality, well-designed, accessible homes is important to delivering Good Growth, ensuring that London remains a mixed and inclusive place in which people have a choice about where to live. The failure to provide sufficient numbers of new homes to meet London's need for affordable, market and specialist housing has given rise to a range of negative social, economic and environmental consequences, including: worsening housing affordability issues, overcrowding, reduced labour market mobility, staff retention issues and longer commuting patterns.

1.4.3 The lack of supply of the homes that Londoners need has played a significant role in London's housing crisis. The 2017 London Strategic Housing Market Assessment has identified a significant overall need for housing, and for affordable housing in particular. London needs 66,000 new homes each year, for at least twenty years, and evidence suggests that 43,000 of them should be genuinely affordable if the needs of Londoners are to

be met. This supports the Mayor's strategic target of 50 per cent of all new homes being genuinely affordable, which is based on viability evidence.

1.4.4 The London Plan is able to look across the city to plan for the housing needs of all Londoners, treating London as a single housing market in a way that is not possible at a local level. In partnership with boroughs, the Mayor has undertaken a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to identify where the homes London needs can be delivered. Ten-year housing targets have been established for every borough, alongside Opportunity Area plans for longer-term delivery where the potential for new homes is especially high. Boroughs can rely on these targets when developing their Development Plan Documents and are not required to take account of nationally-derived local-level need figures.

1.4.5 To meet the growing need, London must seek to deliver new homes through a wide range of development options. Reusing large brownfield sites will remain crucial, although vacant plots are now scarce, and the scale and complexity of large former industrial sites makes delivery slow. Small sites in a range of locations can be developed more quickly, and enable smaller builders to enter the market. Building more housing as part of the development of town centres will also be important, providing homes in well-connected places that will help to sustain local communities.

1.4.6 The homebuilding industry itself also needs greater diversity to reduce our reliance on a small number of large private developers. New and innovative approaches to development, including Build to Rent, community-led housing, and self- and custom-build, will all need to play a role, and more of our new homes will need to be built using precision-manufacturing. Alongside this, there will need to be a greater emphasis on the role councils and housing associations play in building genuinely affordable homes.

1.4.7 There are a range of other measures that have an impact on the availability of homes. For example, existing homes must not be left empty, and have the potential to be brought back into use as affordable housing, and boroughs should use all the tools at their disposal to ensure that homes are actually built after planning permissions are granted.

1.4.8 Delivering the housing London needs will be a huge challenge that will require everyone involved in the housing market to work together. Along with the London Housing Strategy, this London Plan establishes the framework that will make this possible, helping to make London a city that everyone who wants to can call home.

## **GG4 Delivering the homes Londoners need**

### **GG4 Delivering the homes Londoners need**

To create a housing market that works better for all Londoners, those involved in planning and development must:

A ensure that more homes are delivered

B support the delivery of the strategic target of 50 per cent of all new homes being genuinely affordable

C create mixed and inclusive communities, with good quality homes that meet high standards of design and provide for identified needs, including for specialist housing

D identify and allocate a range of sites to deliver housing locally, supporting skilled precision-manufacturing that can increase the rate of building, and planning for all necessary supporting infrastructure from the outset

E establish ambitious and achievable build-out rates at the planning stage, incentivising build-out milestones to help ensure that homes are built quickly and to reduce the likelihood of permissions being sought to sell land on at a higher value.



# Growing a good economy

## Growing a good economy

1.5.1 London is the engine of the UK economy, accounting for more than a fifth of the country's economic output. Its labour market, housing market and transport links are interconnected with the Wider South East city region, which shapes the development of the whole of the UK. Together, London and the Wider South East contribute a full half of the country's output. London has unique strengths in specialist fields like finance, business services, technology, creative industries and law, as well as attracting tourists from around the world, providing a gateway to the rest of the UK. The wealth this generates is essential to keeping the whole country functioning, but the benefits of economic success are not shared evenly within London itself.

1.5.2 The things that make London's economy so strong are the same things that make London an attractive and exciting place to live, work and visit. London's ethos of tolerance and respect, its rich cultural and historic assets, the quality of its streets and public places, its spirit of creativity and entrepreneurialism – these things attract businesses of all sizes and allow them to develop and thrive. The people who these businesses employ need strong communities, good public transport connections, pleasant environments that promote good health, access to shops and local services, and good quality, affordable homes in places they want to live. The continuing success of London's economy is reliant upon making the city work better for everyone.

1.5.3 Projected growth towards 6.9 million jobs by 2041 provides an opportunity to strengthen London's economy for the future, and doing so will depend on increasing diversification. The Central Activities Zone and Northern Isle of Dogs will remain vital to London's economic success, but growth in town centres across London will be equally important, alongside supporting local regeneration, investment in Opportunity Areas and enabling access to a wide range of jobs. Reasonably-priced, good quality employment space will be needed across London to make this happen.

1.5.4 The right infrastructure is also required to help businesses succeed across London. The digital economy, underpinned by world-class digital connectivity, data and digital services is of ever-increasing importance, improving processes, opening up new markets and allowing more flexible working. Convenient transport connections and street, rail and waterway networks that allow the efficient movement of goods and people are also vital, alongside the schools, healthcare facilities and other amenities that employees need to be healthy and productive.

1.5.5 Developing Londoners' skills will help people into work and enable businesses to thrive. By working closely with communities and businesses, London's world-class higher education institutions can support growth and regeneration while addressing skills shortages.

1.5.6 Britain's exit from the European Union will put new pressures on London's economy, and the need to strengthen and diversify London's business base will become ever-more important. Doing so in a way that spreads London's success more equitably will be an important part of delivering Good Growth.

## GG5 Growing a good economy

### GG5 Growing a good economy

To conserve and enhance London's global economic competitiveness and ensure that economic success is shared amongst all Londoners, those involved in planning and development must:

- A promote the strength and potential of the wider city region
- B seek to ensure that London's economy diversifies and that the benefits of economic success are shared more equitably across London
- C plan for sufficient employment and industrial space in the right locations to support economic development and regeneration
- D ensure that sufficient high-quality and affordable housing, as well as physical and social infrastructure is provided to support London's growth
- E ensure that London continues to provide leadership in innovation, research, policy and ideas, supporting its role as an international incubator and centre for learning
- F promote and support London's rich heritage and cultural assets, and its role as a 24-hour city
- G make the fullest use of London's existing and future public transport, walking and cycling network, as well as its network of town centres, to support agglomeration and economic activity
- H recognise and promote the benefits of a transition to a low carbon circular economy to strengthen London's economic success.

## **Increasing efficiency and resilience**

### **Increasing efficiency and resilience**

1.6.1 Successful cities must adapt to a changing world, and a focus on Good Growth provides an opportunity to become more efficient and resilient. A responsible city must limit its impact on climate change while adapting to the consequences of the environmental changes that human behaviour is already creating. Global cities also face other threats against which London must protect its residents and visitors, and proper strategic planning can help to make the city a safer place.

1.6.2 All cities must face up to the reality of climate change and the need to limit their future contribution to this major global problem. This London Plan will require developments to contribute towards London's ambitious target to become zero-carbon by 2050 by increasing energy efficiency, including through the use of smart technologies, and utilising low carbon energy sources. Creating a low carbon circular economy, in which the greatest possible value is extracted from resources before they become waste, is not only socially and environmentally responsible, but will save money and limit the likelihood of environmental threats affecting London's future.

1.6.3 These environmental threats are real and present, and London must be prepared for them. London's homes and infrastructure must be protected against the increasing likelihood of heatwaves, and developments must plan for a more integrated approach to water management, while minimising flood risk.

1.6.4 Equally significant in a global city is the threat of terrorism, and new forms of attack require new forms of defence. Large-scale fires also remain a possibility in London. As public places are made safer and existing housing is improved, these threats underline the importance of collaborative planning with London's police forces and public safety experts, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

1.6.5 Careful planning of strategic and local infrastructure in all its forms can make the city smarter, more efficient and more resilient, preparing it for all that the future may bring. This will require collaboration between the infrastructure industry and planning authorities to determine what is needed where in order to plan for London's future, using the framework established by the Mayor's Strategic Infrastructure Investment Plan.

1.6.6 Ensuring sufficient housing at the right price is also key to the city's resilience. The shortage of affordable housing in the capital is hindering the recruitment and retention of public service workers, including those crucial to the operation of the emergency services, the health system and London's transport infrastructure.

1.6.7 Good planning can make London more resilient against the threats of the modern world, while improving the city's impact on the environment. The approaches set out in this Plan will ensure that London remains a safe and prosperous place to live for many decades to come.

## **GG6 Increasing efficiency and resilience**

### **GG6 Increasing efficiency and resilience**

To help London become a more efficient and resilient city, those involved in planning and development must:  
A seek to improve energy efficiency and support the move towards a low carbon circular economy, contributing towards London becoming a zero-carbon city by 2050

B ensure buildings and infrastructure are designed to adapt to a changing climate, making efficient use of water, reducing impacts from natural hazards like flooding and heatwaves, while mitigating and avoiding contributing to the urban heat island effect

C create a safe and secure environment which is resilient the impact of emergencies including fire and terrorism

D take an integrated and smart approach to the delivery of strategic and local infrastructure by ensuring that public, private, community and voluntary sectors plan and work together.

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