MAYOR OF LONDON

Nicky Gavron AM
Deputy Chair
London Assembly Planning Committee
C/o sheenagh.simpson@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA160320-5120

Date: 3 September 2020

Dear Nicky,

Thank you for the report from the Assembly Planning Committee on Neighbourhood planning – progress and insights. I have considered the recommendations as below. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.

Recommendation 1 – The Mayor should state whether he supports neighbourhood planning as the primary means of capturing community views and enabling communities to shape growth in their areas.

As part of my commitment to good growth, I support empowering communities to have a greater say in how their city develops, whether through Neighbourhood Forums and Plans or other local structures and funding opportunities. Neighbourhood Plans must align with the strategic priorities set out in the London Plan, such as delivering the homes that Londoners need and supporting London's economy.

Recommendation 2 – Publish an annual report on the contribution of neighbourhood planning to the delivery of Mayoral priorities, including the London Plan, Good Growth strategies and Mayoral Development Corporations.

The London Plan Annual Monitoring Report monitors the implementation of the London Plan. As Neighbourhood Plans are focused at the neighbourhood scale, boroughs are better placed to monitor the progress and impact of these plans, alongside their Local Plans.

With greater digital access to planning data, such as through the London Datastore, Neighbourhood Forums are also able to monitor the delivery of their own Neighbourhood Plans.

Recommendation 3 – Convene London's volunteer neighbourhood planners with London boroughs in a symposium to develop a programme for accelerating the delivery of neighbourhood plans and supporting peer-to-peer learning between neighbourhood forums.

My officers would be happy to host a Neighbourhood Planning event, alongside London Councils and the London boroughs. However, the delivery of Neighbourhood Plans needs to be driven by local communities through Neighbourhood Forums and should be a local response to local circumstances.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Recommendation 4 – The Mayor and GLA should engage with neighbourhood planning through the culture, environment, regeneration, transport, communities and social integration teams, not just the planning teams, as a means of improving local areas and meeting strategic priorities.

I am consulted on all emerging Neighbourhood Plans in London. My planning team consult colleagues across the Greater London Authority (GLA) to input into any response. Transport for London (TfL) tend to be consulted separately, but where possible a single response is provided on behalf of City Hall and TfL. GLA officers respond to the consultations where there are strategic issues such as issues relating to the Central Activities Zone, Strategic Industrial Locations, the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and housing delivery. GLA officers would be happy to engage earlier in the Neighbourhood Planning process where there are strategic issues and have stated this to the Neighbourhood Planners group and the London boroughs.

Recommendation 5 – Support action in the nine boroughs that can be described as 'neighbourhood planning deserts' – this could be carried out by 'Public Practice', the not-for-profit social enterprise that the Mayor has supported.

Neighbourhood Planning should be led by local communities, supported in the first instance by local councils. Public Practice's remit is to improve the quality of everyday places by building the public sector's capacity for proactive planning and place-making by placing Associates (built environment practitioners) within public authorities. Where appropriate, these Associates can – depending on the nature of the role they are placed into – help to support Neighbourhood Planning.

Recommendation 6 – Ensure projects identified by neighbourhood forums are considered equally against other proposals for grants from the Good Growth Fund and Citizen-Led Engagement Programme.

All eligible organisations and projects that apply for grants from City Hall programmes are assessed against the same criteria. It should be noted that all current Good Growth Fund funding is committed.

Recommendation 7 – Use part of the Homebuilding Capacity Fund to help London Boroughs carry out outreach and liaison with neighbourhood forums to speed up the process of neighbourhood planning, and use 'Public Practice' to build capacity in local planning departments for Neighbourhood Planning.

The primary aim of the Homebuilding Capacity Fund is to facilitate the delivery of housing. All projects from this fund have now been awarded. As noted above, the aim of Public Practice is to build capacity and increase built environment expertise in public authorities, which can include supporting Neighbourhood Planning.

Recommendation 8 – Provide a response to the recommendations of Neighbourhood Planners. London's report on "Neighbourhood Planning in London".

Many of the recommendations in the Neighbourhood Planning in London report echo these from the Planning Committee and require additional resources. My officers are happy to engage with Neighbourhood Forums on strategic matters, which are the focus of City Hall's planning responsibilities. In tandem with this, sufficient funding should be provided by the Government to Neighbourhood Forums and local authorities to facilitate the development of Neighbourhood Plans.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Recommendation 9 – When coming to revise or alter the new London Plan after adoption, reintroduce policy and text from the Further Alterations to the London Plan (2015) that explicitly set out how Neighbourhood Planning can support local priorities, renewable energy schemes and the Mayor's Good Growth objectives (in particular, policies SD1 and SD10).

The draft London Plan acknowledges the important role of Neighbourhood Planning including at paragraph 1.1.5, which states: *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.* This is in the context of the Good Growth objectives – specifically the objective to 'build strong and inclusive communities'. When next reviewing the London Plan, I will ask officers to give further consideration to how Neighbourhood Plans can support my Good Growth objectives.
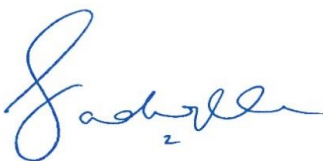
Recommendation 10 – Provide funding and capacity-building to empower neighbourhoods and local communities to shape their future, and if appropriate, to stimulate a Neighbourhood Planning process to help deliver new London Plan policy SD10, in relation to Strategic and Local Regeneration, which says "the Mayor will provide leadership and support for regeneration through this Plan and his other strategies and programmes".

Neighbourhood Planning is funded by the Government. Neighbourhood Forums in London are, however, always welcome to apply for additional funding from relevant City Hall funding streams. For example, whilst the current Good Growth Fund is fully committed, Neighbourhood Forums would be well placed to apply for any future rounds. The GLA Planning team does not have the funding or capacity to support Neighbourhood Planning directly, but officers would welcome early engagement with Neighbourhood Forums on strategic issues. The London Datastore also provides a range of statistics that can help Neighbourhood Forums to understand the demographics of their communities when developing Neighbourhood Plans.

Recommendation 11 – Report back to the GLA Planning Committee by the end of the financial year 2020/2021 on progress with implementing these recommendations in the next Mayoralty.

As a strategic planning authority, the GLA must focus on spatial development issues that are of a strategic priority for London as a whole, including supporting London's economy, enabling a greener city and building the homes Londoners need. Neighbourhood Forums should be supported by local authorities and appropriately funded by the Government to ensure that they can continue to make an important contribution to shaping growth in their local areas, building on the knowledge, insight and expertise of London's communities.

Yours sincerely,

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London